CANADA'S HISTORY MAGAZINE

The Beaver

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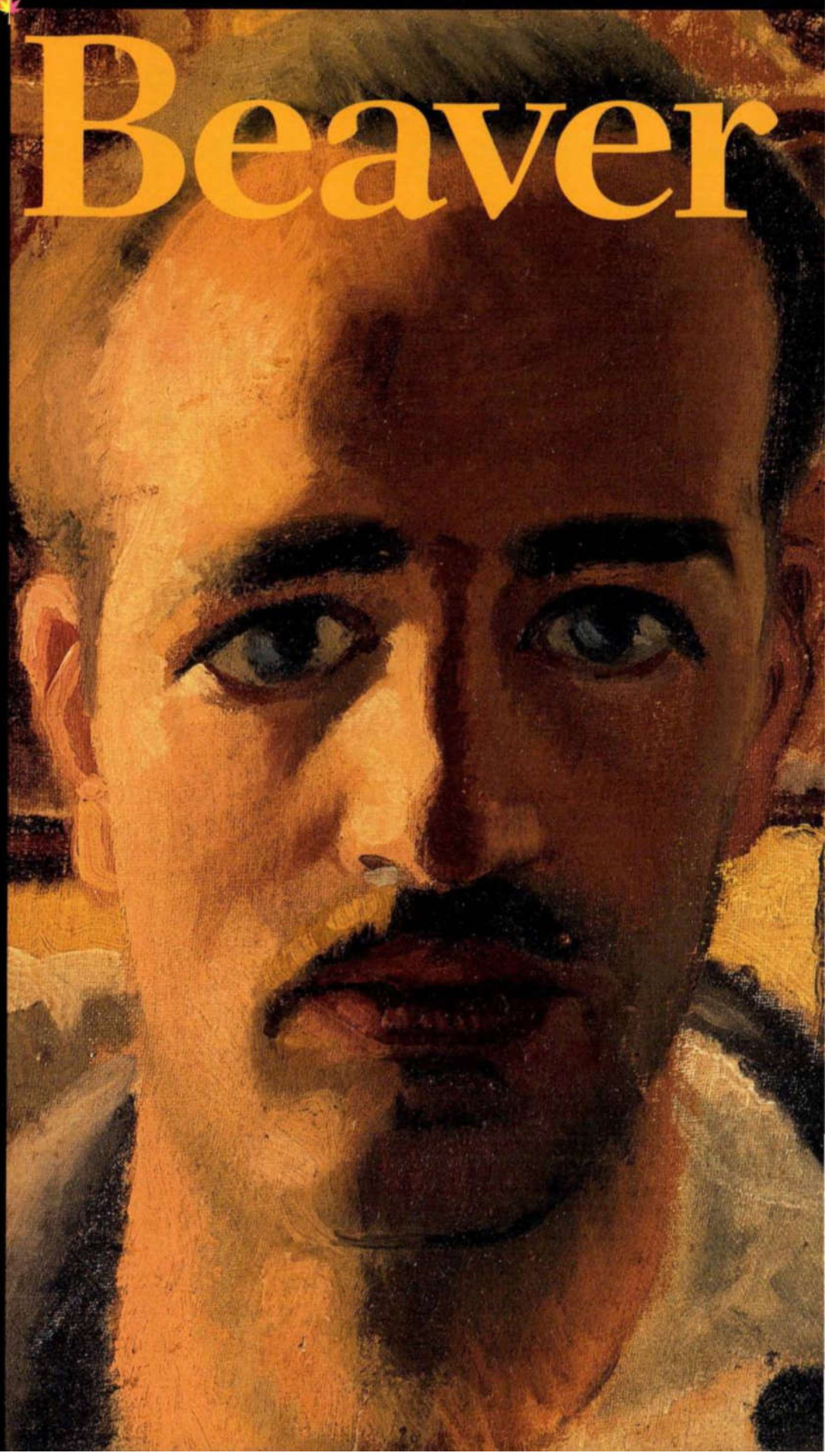

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The Beaver

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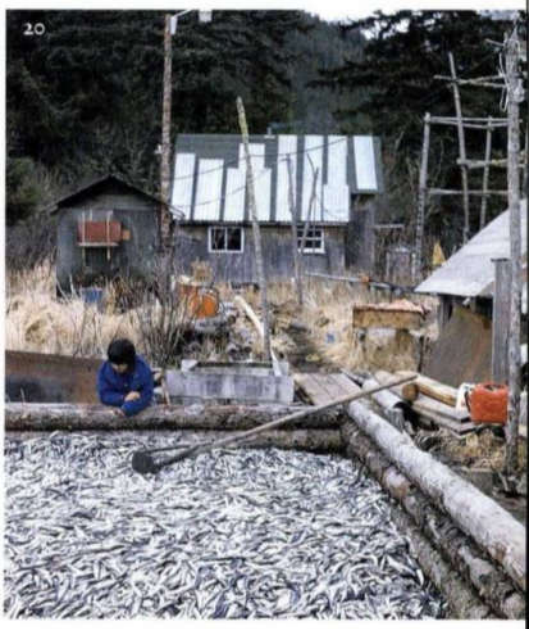

TOM KOPPEL

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On the cover: *Self-portrait* (detail), oil on canvas by Paul-Émile Borduas, c. 1935. From the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Gift of Mme Paul-Émile Borduas, Beloeil, Quebec, 1969.

Letters

The *Beaver* welcomes readers' comments. E-mail us at <beaver@cyberspc.mb.ca> or write to *The Beaver*, 478–167 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 0T6. Please include your address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.

Possibly the last word on *Horror*

In the August/September issue, Christopher Moore speaks reassuringly of the level of Canadian interest in history. Unfortunately, he also speaks approvingly of the now thoroughly discredited TV series *The Valour and the Horror* about Canadian soldiers and airmen in World War II. The series may be great entertainment, or may be good antiwar fiction, but a "documentary" is "a film that records or exhibits a phase of regional, social or cultural life *without fictionalization*." The last two words (my italics) are fatal to any claim that the series constitute a documentary.

It is not possible in the available space to list all, or even most, of the fictional "facts" set out in the films. A few examples will have to suffice.

The film on the Canadian army in Normandy centres on an unsuccessful attack on a part of Verriers Ridge by a half-strength battalion of the Black Watch Regiment. The script says:

> *Major General Ron Keller was in charge*
> *Keller was a boozer and was drunk at the time of the attack*
> *"Before the invasion the judgment on Keller was he was incompetent to command a 20,000-man division but ..."*
> *The attack went on without artillery, heavy machine-guns or tank support. The Canadian army was ill trained, ill led, and ill equipped, which led to the defeat.*

Each of these allegations is demonstrably false, and a number of other misstatements of fact relating to Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force are also untrue.

The CBC directed its Ombudsman to inquire. He consulted a number of historians, including historians nominated by the author of the film. In his report, he set out a number of misstatements of fact and concluded that the film was "flawed" and not up to CBC standards.

A subcommittee of the Canadian Senate heard nine military historians, including three nominated by the author of the film. None supported the film as being historically accurate.

Other Canadian, English, and American historians were consulted. None supported the film as being accurate.

The suggestion that viewers should watch both *No Price Too High* and *The Valour and the Horror* implies a view that these two series are merely looking at the same historical facts and arriving at different conclusions. Not so. I know of no criticism of the first series as being inaccurate. The second series is clearly largely fiction.

The films show the incompetence of Canadian soldiers, the incompetence (or worse) of Canadian generals, and war crimes committed by immature Canadian airmen. It focuses on failure. Canadians are shown as naive, stupid, and incompetent.

The unanswered question is "Why?" Why such a negative portrayal? It is part of a sad aspect of Canadian culture that Canadians are constantly being put down by Canadians. Canadian critics save their sharpest barbs for Canadians. The conduct and achievements of the Canadian armed services during World War II were exceptional. This was no Vietnam. The enemy was the most evil organization in world history and the battle was for the survival of civilization. There is no justification for teaching Canadian students to be ashamed of themselves or ashamed of their country.

J.R. Barr
St. Catharines, Ontario

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British aim in Quebec education questioned

I THINK PHILIP JENSEN gave a very inadequate and misleading version of the early history of religion and education in Quebec in his story about the Sisters of St. Ann [August/September 1998].

Before the British came, schools in many remote areas were nonexistent because residents had to rely on the Roman Catholic missions. It was not uncommon for children of illiterate parents to remain illiterate until they left for larger communities.

Following the 1759 battle on the Plains of Abraham, when Mont Royal was besieged by British General Jeffrey Amherst, the French governor, Pierre Francois de Rigaud, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, signed a capitulation with Amherst on September 8, 1760 (*not* 1759), which handed over not only Mont Royal but all of New France. De Rigaud pleaded for and got several concessions. Article 27 reads: "the free exercise of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion shall subsist entire in such manner that all classes and people of the town and rural districts, places and distant posts may continue to assemble in churches, and to frequent the sacraments as heretofore without being molested in any manner, directly or indirectly."

This was confirmed in the Treaty of Paris in 1763, by which Britain formally acquired Canada, with condition "as far as the laws of Great Britain permit." This was further sanctioned in the Quebec Act of 1774, again insofar as it did not conflict with the British king's supremacy. This in itself was all a very great privilege at the time because, in Britain, Roman Catholicism was banned until the penal laws were somewhat mitigated by Parliament in 1778 with total Catholic emancipation not achieved until 1829 (and only then because of unrest in southern Ireland).

From that date in 1760, Canadians of French ancestry were also allowed to retain their French civil law structure and to continue to use their language and culture in their homes and schools such as they were. Thus their religion continued to hold sway.

King George III, through his parliament controlled by William Pitt, promoted emigration of British subjects, all Protestant, to Canada in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. It quickly became necessary to have schools for the children of these people. The official document in Jensen's article is correct. However, the intent has been incorrectly interpreted. These new people were members of the Church of England. The Roman Catholics of French extraction were never "required" to join this church. The intent was that they "*might by degree* be *induced* to embrace the Protestant Religion" [my italics].

Scrupulous care was taken by British governors like James Murray and Sir Guy Carleton to see that this policy of toleration was carried out. Many of the original inhabitants and their descendants in New France had known no other religion than Roman Catholicism and this new religion opened the minds of many of them. There had never been an educational system in early Quebec other than those run by the priests and nuns, who taught everything in accord with outlines from Rome.

Jensen's statement "The people refused to send their children to the new schools," as an excuse for illiteracy, is misleading. And "within a few generations no more than a few members of each parish were able to read or write" as such is erroneous. Much time was spent indoctrinating the young who were not allowed to read or write anything but what was prescribed.

R.E. Bowley
Peterborough, Ontario

Irvine and Riel

IN YOUR ARTICLE, "FRANCIS J. DICKENS, PROFILE OF AN OFFICER," [June/July 1998], you mentioned my great-great uncle, Acheson Gosford Irvine (not Irving, as spelled on p. 15). Following is some further information about my uncle and his relationship with Louis Riel.

As commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police, Colonel Irvine had custody of Riel during his last trial. He became friends with Riel, who entrusted him with his will, his stirrup, and his sword. In later years, my uncle spent his summers in Murray Bay, Quebec, next door to his niece, my grandmother. When he died, he left Riel's articles to my grandmother, who hung them around the fireplace in her sitting room. He also passed on his feelings about Riel to my grandmother, who passed them on to me. She and I would sit on the sofa in front of the fire where she would let me hold and admire the stirrups, which were made of stiff, old leather with beautiful coloured beadwork on the sides. Though worn, they were still in very good shape. She would tell me about Riel, how he had tried to save lands, farms, and homesteads in Western Canada for the Métis people, and what a brave man he had been. We would agree that the Government of Canada's hanging him was cruel, although we were never quite able to understand the problem. Then we would put the stirrups back in their place. When my grandmother died many years later, she left Riel's will and stirrups to my mother, who in turn left them to me. I thought they should be saved for all Canadians, so they are now in the McCord Museum in Montreal, where they are well cared for.

Katherine Mackenzie
Georgeville, Quebec

Correction to connection

"THE FIRST NWMP TREK: FROM OTTAWA TO THE STONE FORT, 1873" [June/ July 1998] was a delight to read, and as an employee at Quetico Provincial Park, I found it relevant to my job.

However, on your map, page 8, the section from Thunder Bay to Sturgeon Lake has a small mistake. The French Portage, shown on the map connecting French Lake to Pickerel Lake, actually runs from Windigoostigwan Lake into French. French and Pickerel Lakes are joined by the navigable Pickerel River.

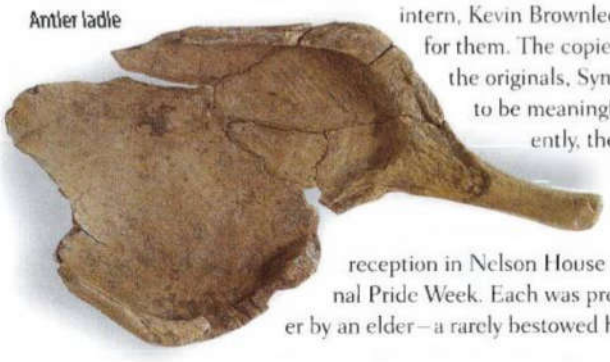
Overall, however, the issue was great. We learned some new facts and even incorporated some of them into our work. Thank you for a great publication, and continue the superb work.

Tara Swift
Quetico Park, Ontario

Duplicating the past

Repatriating native burial artifacts has become accepted practice in archaeological circles in recent times, but this fall the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature in Winnipeg returned some precious cultural property to two northern Manitoba communities with a unique educational twist: The museum replicated the artifacts – exquisitely crafted bone and antler tools – with an artistic precision that makes them (at least to our eyes) indistinguishable from the originals, then presented them as part of teaching displays to classrooms in Nelson House and South Indian Lake. According to Leigh Syms, curator of archaeology at the museum, the Winnipeg institution's replication-and-return approach represents a further advance in restoring materials to communities of origin and publicly sharing knowledge of precontact cultures.

The artifacts, from two separate sites, are themselves a bonanza. In one, discovered in the early 1990s by members of the provincial historic resources branch and local native archaeologists surveying the shore of Threepoint Lake, eighty kilometres west of Thompson, were found over forty tools – knives, spears, awls, even a toy harpoon – buried four thousand years ago with the remains of a fourteen-year-old boy. Syms calls the cache the oldest group of bone and antler tools found in the boreal forest in northern Canada, and a rare find because acidic forest soils preserve remains poorly. The second site, dated to around 1665 at Nagami Bay on South Indian Lake, 140 kilometres northwest of Thompson, contained the tools and jewellery of a twenty-five-year-old woman from the relatively brief protocontact period, the period in which trade items from Europeans made their way to natives before direct contact. (A delicate bird-bone necklace, for example, contains two blue glass beads.) The artifacts were removed to Winnipeg from their resting places along the eroding shorelines with the permission of native elders and with appropriate ceremony. They were also returned to the earth with similar regard last summer. In the intervening years, museum staff and contracted artists made models of the artifacts and Syms and his aboriginal archaeology intern, Kevin Brownlee, designed cabinet displays for them. The copies needed to be as good as the originals, Syms says, if the artifacts were to be meaningful to viewers. And, apparently, they were meaningful. Syms reports he and other archaeologists involved received a phenomenal reception in Nelson House during September's Aboriginal Pride Week. Each was presented with an eagle feather by an elder – a rarely bestowed honour.


Antler ladle

Coming to a TV set near you . . .

Whether a film on Big Bear will do for Saskatchewan what a film on the Titanic is doing for Halifax is probably a question dancing through the heads of at least some Saskatchewan tourism officials.

Long after Edmonton writer Rudy Wiebe wrote his 1973 Governor General's Award-winning novel, *The Temptations of Big Bear,* and more than a century after Big Bear himself died on the Poundmaker Reserve in northern Saskatchewan, a four-hour television miniseries on the life of the controversial Cree chief, coproduced by the CBC and four private Canadian film companies, is scheduled for broadcast January 3 and 4. No film was made in the immediate aftermath of Wiebe's highly praised novel because, as reported in the *Globe and Mail,* the talent did not exist to produce a film with an entirely Cree point of view that utilized native actors, writers, and directors. In the past quarter-century, however, much has changed. Big Bear is being directed by Métis filmmaker Gil Cardinal (*North of 60, The Rez*) with Gordon Tootoosis (Albert on *North of 60*) as Big Bear, Tantoo Cardinal as his wife, and Lorne Cardinal as his son. The Indians are the stars. The white guys are the extras.

The miniseries recounts the story of Big Bear (Mistahimaskwa) and his struggles against the encroachment of European settlers, the demise of the buffalo, and the inequitable treaty conditions that drove his people into poverty. Though Cree history is the substance of the film, Cree language will not be spoken. English will be (but only by the Cree). To give a sense of the chasm between the two cultures (and avoid subtitles), the series creators decided the English (the white people, that is) would speak an invented language designed to sound to us television viewers like gibberish, much as English in the nineteenth century sounded to the Cree.

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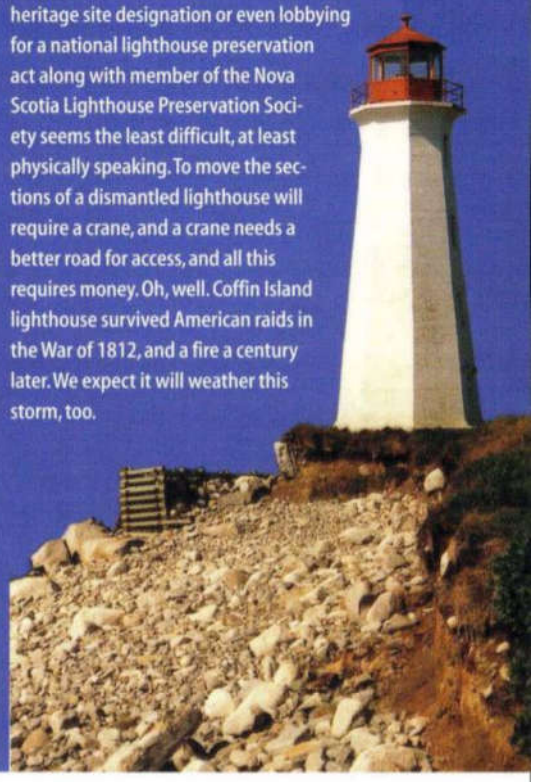
Let there be light

"It will be like slicing a banana," Ken Wilkinson explains, "only on a bigger scale." It's the sort of metaphor that clings to the imagination, particularly when the thing being sliced like a banana is, in fact, twenty-five metres of lighthouse. "It sounded hare-brained at the time," Wilkinson admits, but barring acts of god or government (which may be the same thing), in the spring Coffin Island lighthouse at the mouth of Liverpool Harbour on Nova Scotia's South Shore will be cut section by section and reassembled (*not* like a banana) several metres back on Coffin Island, well out of the way of the pounding ocean, which, even as you read these very words, is lapping dangerously close to the base of the venerable structure.

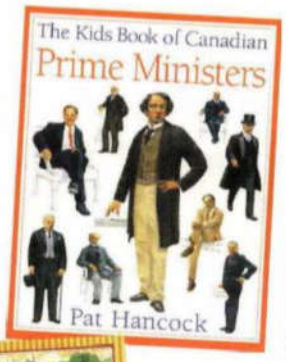
Lighthouses have been on the government downsize and decommission list for some time, and Coffin Island lighthouse, the fifth oldest in Nova Scotia, was declared surplus last summer and slated for demolition. But the people of Queens County rallied round, formed the Coffin Island Lighthouse Heritage Society (of which Wilkinson is chairman) and bargained with the Canadian Coast Guard (which tends to view lighthouses in an age of electronic navigational aids as archaic) for a year's moratorium. Well, *whew!* Nova Scotia without lighthouses seems to us like New York without skyscrapers or wheatfields without grain elevators. (Who can forget the emblematic Peggy's Cove lighthouse, the stalwart backdrop to last September's tragic Swissair Flight 111 crash?) Coffin Island lighthouse is a stop on Nova Scotia's tourist Lighthouse Route and those determined to preserve it see it as an integral part of the Liverpool Bay area's tourist industry and economic development. Not that having a light in the distance when you're in a small boat without a global-positioning system would be such a bad thing.

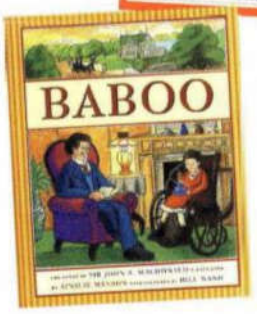
Like Sambro lighthouse in Halifax Harbour, which also needs a facelift, Coffin Island lighthouse is not peculiar in suffering the effects of cutbacks in terms of peeling paint, but it's unique in suffering the encroaching Atlantic Ocean to such a menacing degree. The sea has eroded past old cribwork right to the foundation of the lighthouse, bringing the danger of its toppling in the next major storm, which would make it the first Nova Scotia lighthouse lost to erosion. As interim measures, the Coffin Island Lighthouse Heritage Society plans this fall to pile rocks around the site and this winter to keep the light burning to keep public interest kindled. The spring will see more strenuous measures, of which seeking a heritage site designation or even lobbying for a national lighthouse preservation act along with member of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society seems the least difficult, at least physically speaking. To move the sections of a dismantled lighthouse will require a crane, and a crane needs a better road for access, and all this requires money. Oh, well. Coffin Island lighthouse survived American raids in the War of 1812, and a fire a century later. We expect it will weather this storm, too.



CHRIS MILLS

Serious seasonal shopping





Christmas approacheth, as is its wont, and like earnest (though never joyless) maiden aunts we here at the *Beaver* feel compelled to recommend improving sorts of gifts for children because we know parents will be bound – under threat of tantrum – to purchase the frivolous and faddish – toys, mostly. Sturdy underwear crossed our minds as a suitable stocking stuffer, but we settled instead on books, good books, the sort (in keeping with our mandate as Canada's history magazine; see cover) that strengthen a Canadian child's defences against American TV rubbish that suggests George Washington was the father of *our* country. The father of *our* country, children, was Sir John A. Macdonald, and his life and times are ably described for the eight-to-twelve set in Pat Hancock's *The Kids Book of Canadian Prime Ministers* (Kids Can Press, $18.95) along with the nineteen PMs that follow. Even we in the post- (*very* post-) eight-to-twelve set found a few revelations. Jean Chrétien has two other names, Joseph and Jacques! Sir John Thompson died at Windsor Castle as he sat down to lunch with Queen Victoria! In Ainslie Manson's charmingly illustrated *Baboo* (Groundwood, $15.95), Sir John A. takes a supporting role in the story of his disabled daughter, Mary (a.k.a Baboo), whose life was changed by a gift, a typewriter, from her father, which enabled her to communicate independently and turned her into an inveterate correspondent until she died at age sixty-four.

Meanwhile, the theme of Canada as a safe haven is picked up by two authors who have each chosen the drama of escape. Escap*ist* literature, you could say, but in the best sense. In Barbara Greenwood's *The Last Safe House* (Kids Can Press, $14.95), an eleven-year-old girl, a runaway slave from the American South, braves the network of people that passes slaves in secret northward through the United States and into Canada to find refuge with a family in St. Catharines, Ontario that happens to have a girl her own age. Of course, *something happens* when the two girls are alone together, but who are we to give away the ending? *The Last Safe House* mixes fact and fiction, but William Kaplan's *One More Border* (Groundwood, $19.95) is the true story of his grandparents' and his father's flight from Nazi terror. Lithuanian Jews, the Kaplans found their only escape was the long way around – through Siberia to Japan and across the Pacific Ocean to Vancouver where a train carried them to relatives in Cornwall, Ontario, a journey of 32,000 kilometres. Both books have extra stuff – maps, sidebars, glossaries, indexes, all which we think very educational and *very* improving. And, of course, the sort of thing that helps make these books a jolly good read as well.

ANNALEE GREENBERG

Explorations

Our New Look: The *Beaver* Evolves

By now, you've noticed that this month's issue of the *Beaver* is different. You've encountered a new cover design, and you've already made your way through letters and enjoyed the history news items that make up our Currents section. So what's it all about?

At the *Beaver* we have chosen to ring in 1999 with a new format. Why now? And why change at all?

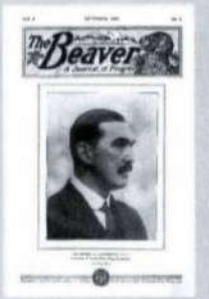
For a few years, we have been talking and listening to our readers and potential readers. Many among our loyal, existing audience have told us not to change a thing. Yet in the same breath they'll state they find our text too dense or have no easy way to identify the stories that would interest them most. One gentleman, a long-time subscriber, told us he was looking forward to his impending retirement so that he could sit down and read the pile of *Beaver*s that had accumulated in his den. He had no time to read them just now. Another, a busy teacher, told us she would like to subscribe but didn't feel she could. As an inveterate "skimmer," she wanted visual signposts that would alert her to articles she could bookmark for later reading.

Both these scenarios illustrate a dilemma. How do we serve our existing readership while attracting a new one? How can we show our potential readers what our existing readers already know? That Canadian history is anything but boring – it's dynamic, surprising, and often, not at all what we learned in eighth-grade history class. Part of the answer lay in establishing a design that was fresh, but that also respected the *Beaver*'s venerable history. Continuity was the key.

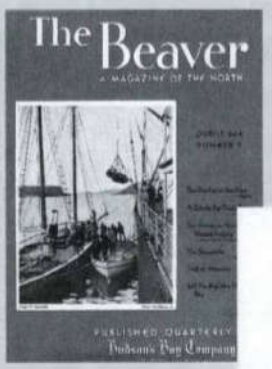
We called in Pat Stanton, a Pratt-trained, Winnipeg-based graphic designer with years of experience in visual

When undertaking the redesign of the *Beaver* magazine, we looked to our past to inform us. When the *Beaver* was first launched in 1920, it was, quite simply, a house magazine for employees of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The *Beaver*'s first full-colour cover appeared in December 1924, a striking example of the early Art Deco design of the era. A pivotal change occurred in September 1933, when the *Beaver* broke out of the confines of its small digest size to a larger format. That page size, slightly modified, as well as the two-column layout for features, still remains.



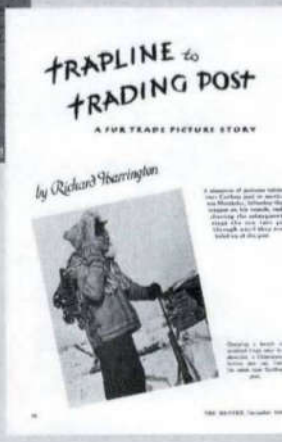
Vol. 1, no. 1, 1920



September 1933

The September 1933 issue also sported a new subtitle, *A Magazine of the North*, which heralded a new direction for the magazine and recognized readers from beyond the sphere of the Hudson's Bay Company. Inside, editor Douglas McKay introduced documentary photo spreads, recognizing that photographs had an editorial function as well as a decorative one. The subtitle was to remain for another fifty-three years.

Under the editorship of Clifford Wilson from 1939 to 1957, the *Beaver*'s editorial standards were forged. Graphically, the *Beaver* continued its photodocumentary tradition and adapted to the type trends of the era. Full-colour



December 1948

communications. Her redesign has addressed many of our goals for the magazine. The new type style, Fairfield, is not only inviting and easy to read, it's versatile, allowing the designer to create a range of visual moods – to, as Pat puts it, "express the variety of voices encountered in the different subjects that we cover." Fairfield has its own history. Designed in 1940 and further developed in 1947, it was rereleased in 1991 for use on computers. The complementary sans-serif type, Myriad, provides a counterpoint to the text type and adds texture and contrast when required.

The new design also enhances the variety of other traditional typographic elements we use, such as headings, captions, and quotations, that allow the "skimmer" – the reader who can't take the time right now – to get a snapshot of the story. We think that when busy readers know what awaits them, they will set aside the time to further explore the stories that interest them.

Pat has also introduced new ways of handling the images that we use – the old photos and artwork that are culled from archives, libraries, and individuals, and that invariably present a series of reproduction challenges. Today's advancements in printing technology are helping us make the most of pictorial materials from yesterday.

You'll also notice a dramatic change to our cover. It is unlike any other magazine that you'll see on Canada's newsstands, and we're certain that its distinctiveness will make it quickly identifiable to browsers. It also introduces the subhead, *Canada's History Magazine* – sharing with potential new readers a fact our existing readership has known for years.

And finally, we have made some changes to the interior structure of the *Beaver*. The Explorations column remains at the front of the magazine, as always, to explore current issues in the context of their history. Letters are now in the front of the magazine – our readers' voices are important, and they provide a strong sense of the magazine's identity. Currents is a new department that focuses on history where it's happening today – in museums and at garage sales, in old farmhouses and churches, in classrooms and in attics, on ancient battlefields and in farmers' fields.

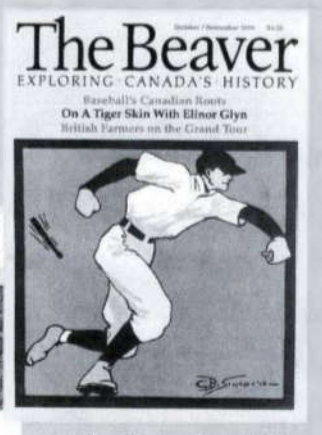
Our review section will still bring you reviews on the latest history titles; it will also focus on films, exhibits, and television. Christopher Moore continues to offer insight into who is doing what in the name of history – writers, artists, publishers. Thus the title Writers of History has been jettisoned to reflect the broader base of subjects that Chris brings to our pages. As our sole regular columnist, Chris will continue to write under his name.

But more than anything, this redesign confirms what we all know about history – it's about change and it's about people. A new look should serve our readers – by making our writers' words shine – but it should also reflect all that Canadian history is – dynamic, dramatic, and essential to who we are.

printing was introduced under editor Malvina Bolus in 1959, a development she used to produce breathtaking layouts. In the '70s and early '80s, editor Helen Burgess often looked to our landscape to explain the Canadian psyche.

In April/May 1986, the *Beaver* took the subtitle *Exploring Canada's History*. Editor Christopher Dafoe would expand the magazine's scope to, literally, explore Canada's history in every corner, not just within the bailiwick of the Bay. The *Beaver* became a more textured magazine, looking not only at the distant but the recent past, not only at serious history, but at the playful and unusual. When the *Beaver* was acquired by Canada's National History Society from the Bay in 1994, the transition was complete. Which brings us to the present – a *Beaver* that reflects the rich tapestry that is Canada.

Autumn 1973


The Beaver
EXPLORING CANADA'S HISTORY
Baseball's Canadian Roots
On A Tiger Skin With Elinor Glyn
British Farmers on the Grand Tour

October/November 1994

A Community of Feeling

Quebec's Automatists and *Refus global*

by Patricia Smart

In the early 1940s, a small group of Quebec artists came together to explore the modern ideas emerging in the international realm of art. Inspired by the Surrealists, who praised the creative force of the subconscious, the Automatists, as they were called, were drawn to the liberating and energizing forms of abstract expressionism, modern dance, and avant-garde theatre. Their 1948 manifesto *Refus global*, penned by painter Paul-Émile Borduas, took aim not only at the stultifying state of traditional art – it defied the parochial society of Duplessis-era Quebec in its call for "splendid anarchy." Despite strong and swift retribution, its message of liberation prevailed, a harbinger of the Quiet Revolution that was to follow.

On August 9, 1948, a small group of Quebec artists under the leadership of painter Paul-Émile Borduas published a manifesto. The document was a call for the arrival of modernity in art and culture, and represented the first decisive break with the values of traditional French Canada. *Refus global* (total refusal), as it was called, denounced the conservative and church-dominated values that held Quebec in a stranglehold, and passionately affirmed the link between artistic creation and the possibility of social transformation. The following lines are some of the best-known parts of the twelve-page document:

The frontiers of our dreams are no longer the same ...

Beyond Christianity, we are touching the burning human brotherhood to which it has become a closed door.

The reign of fear in its many forms has ended ...

We invite those tempted by the adventure to join us.

We dare to imagine a time when man, liberated from his useless chains, will realize the fullness of his individual gifts – in the unpredictable and necessary order of spontaneity, in splendid anarchy.

Until then, without rest or pause, in a community of feeling with all those who thirst for a better life and regardless of the waiting, the encouragement or the persecution we may encounter, we will joyfully pursue our savage need of liberation.

These were the years in Quebec history often referred to as "*la Grande Noirceur*" (the Great Darkness), during which the combined forces of the church and of Premier Maurice Duplessis's government stifled the province under an iron rule of repression and censorship. At the time, the fervent words of *Refus global* were fighting words. Retaliation against Borduas, a teacher at Montreal's *École du meuble*, was swift: he was fired from his job and eventually forced to leave Quebec, first for New York and later Paris, where he died relatively unknown in 1960 at the age of fifty-four. But it was not until a year or two after Borduas's death, as Quebec began its rapid move towards modernization, that the importance of the manifesto become clear to Quebeckers. Each decade since then, the anniversary of its publication has been an important event, and this year, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary, there have been a whole host of celebrations: radio and television programs, art exhibits in all the major galleries, conferences, lectures, a number of new books, and a film.

The most important impact on Canadian art of the Automatists, as the members of the group were called, was the introduction of abstraction into painting, and the paintings of at least two members of the group, Borduas and his pupil Jean-Paul Riopelle, are familiar to all Canadian art lovers. But the productions of the group also included literature, dance, and avant-garde theatre. The young artists who joined Borduas in drafting and signing the manifesto had honed their ideas over six years of discussion and artistic experimentation: reading Marx and Freud; listening to mod-

Sous le vent de l'île (Leeward of the Island), by Paul-Émile Borduas, 1947. A key painting at the group's second exhibit in 1947, its featherlike forms were created by surrealist techniques. The painting's alternative title, *Automatisme 1.47*, prompted critic Tancrède Marsil to dub Borduas's circle as *Les Automatistes*.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA (OTTAWA) PURCHASED, 1953

ern music ranging from Stravinsky to jazz, blues, and voodoo rhythms; experimenting with avant-garde theatre and dance productions – always testing their own creative abilities against Borduas's teaching that all authentic art must spring from the very deepest and most mysterious realms of the self. If any one influence on their aesthetic and social ideas predominated, it was that of surrealism, with its emphasis on the interdependence of art, the liberation of the individual unconscious, and the transformation of society.

Surrealism grew out of the *Manifeste du surrealisme* published in Paris in 1924 by the poet Andre Breton and others. The strong influence of Freud on the group was obvious in Breton's assertion that the unconscious mind was the only true reality, and that "pure psychic automatism" (achieved by exercises like automatic writing) was the best way to access the unconscious through art. It was these ideas, far more than the paintings of surrealist artists like Salvador Dali and others, which influenced the Automatists. For while surrealist paintings were figurative or representational, containing recognizable figures from everyday reality but in dream form (like Dali's famous watches that resembled fried eggs), the Automatists moved quickly towards abstract.

Paul-Émile Borduas and his visionary ideas attracted a group of young Quebec artists, who met regularly in Borduas's studio to discuss social ideology, psychoanalysis, and surrealism. After the furor that followed publication of *Refus global* in 1948, life became intolerable for Borduas. He eventually left Montreal, and without him at their centre, the group drifted apart. Nonetheless, Borduas's influence prevailed, and the Automatists would continue individually the artistic explorations inspired by their teacher.

MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS / JACQUES GODBOUT – NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

In February 1947, the Automatists exhibited their work at the Gauvreau apartment on Sherbrook Street in Montreal. From left to right: Claude Gauvreau, Mme Gauvreau, Marcel Barbeau, Madeleine Arbour, Paul-Émile Borduas, Madeleine Lalonde, Bruno Cormier, Jean-Paul Mousseau.

MAURICE PERRON

Danse dans la neige, 1948, was created and performed by Françoise Sullivan. Sullivan, a pioneer of modern dance in Canada, applied the ideas of automatism to movement. "The artist must liberate the energies of his body through movements which are spontaneously dictated to him," she wrote.

or nonfigurative, painting. And the Automatists were strikingly different from the surrealists in one other important way: seven of the fifteen young artists grouped around Borduas were women, a much higher proportion than the number of women in the surrealist group. In this respect, as well as in their radical ideas and artistic innovations, they were a surprising outgrowth of a very conservative society. A look at their experiences in the 1940s gives us a sense of what that society was like and of the courage that must have been required to challenge its values as openly and uncompromisingly as they dared to do.

Except for Borduas, all the members of the group were in their teens or early twenties, and many had known each other since their early school days. Four of them – Louise Renaud, Françoise Sullivan, Pierre Gauvreau, and Fernand Leduc – had already formed a group when they were students at Montreal's *École des beaux-arts* in 1940 to teach themselves something about modern art. This subject was not to be found in the stultifying curriculum of the school, where students were allowed to do nothing but copy ancient drawings and sculptures and were forbidden to express their own creativity. Such rigid and negative attitudes, present at all levels of the educational system, were meant to produce adults who would unquestioningly bend to all the demands of the church and government. These narrow and imitative approaches to art and life would later be denounced in the manifesto as "academicism" – the opposite of the "living art" the Automatists were interested in creating. Borduas's recollections of his own students at *École du meuble* (Montreal's *other* art school) give an idea of the passivity and fear inculcated in the students by this system and help to explain why the manifesto's call for individual freedom and creativity was so revolutionary in the context of the times:

> *I can still see them, the big boys of the first year class, nervous about the new milieu they find themselves in, prudent, self-effacing and extremely impersonal, approaching the study of drawing with their deeply rooted prejudices and the passive attitudes ingrained in them by twelve or fifteen years of study:* WELL-BEHAVED, SILENT, INHUMAN. *They wait for precise, authoritarian and infallible instructions. They are prepared to deny themselves totally in order to acquire a bit of technique and a few new recipes to add to the already heavy baggage they are carrying.*

If there is a date at which we can situate the beginnings of the Automatist group, it is probably in the fall of 1941, when Pierre Gauvreau was invited to participate in an art show for which Borduas was one of the jury members. Borduas was so enthusiastic about the young man's work that he invited him to visit his studio; Gauvreau asked if he could bring some of his friends along. More than fifty years later, Françoise Sullivan recalls the magic of that Tuesday evening visit to Borduas's austere, white-painted studio near Lafontaine Park:

> *There was hardly any furniture, maybe a chair and an easel, and Borduas's paintings were all on the floor, turned towards the wall. He showed them to us one by one, while talking to us about art. We stayed until the wee small hours of the morning, and when we left we were ecstatic. We knew we had found the person who would open up to us the world we had been searching for.*

Soon a group had formed that would meet every Tuesday evening at Borduas's studio: Sullivan, Pierre Gauvreau, Louise Renaud and Fernand Leduc from the *École des beaux-arts*, Borduas's students Jean-Paul Riopelle, Marcel Barbeau, and Maurice Perron from the *École du meuble*, and, a little later, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Françoise Lespérance (later Riopelle's wife), Thérèse Renaud (Louise's younger sister, who would later marry Fernand Leduc), Madeleine Arbour, Marcelle Ferron, the popular young actress Muriel Guilbault, Claude Gauvreau (Pierre's younger brother), and medical student Bruno Cormier. All were not painters, however – the group produced innovative works in theatre, dance, and literature as well as visual art. Françoise Sullivan and Françoise Riopelle are two of the three founders of modern dance in Quebec, and the third, Jeanne Renaud (Louise and Thérèse Renaud's younger sister) was a member of the group as well, though she was too young to sign the manifesto. Madeleine Arbour was a window dresser at Birks in the 1940s, and later became famous for her work in television, design, and interior decoration. The two writers in the group were Claude Gauvreau and Thérèse Renaud.

Other young people were often present at these gatherings – among them future prime minister Pierre Trudeau – but the fifteen named above are those who stayed together as a group and later signed the manifesto with Borduas in 1948. Together, they would read and discuss the latest surrealist publications from France and New York, talk passionately about the need for change in their society and in the world, and gradually develop the abstract painting techniques that would take them far beyond surrealism.

By 1946, after years of experimenting with surrealist techniques that were designed to liberate the unconscious, the Automatists were producing fascinating new paintings with a clearly identifiable style. Often the painters would splash or drip paint directly onto the canvas or allow shapes, colours, and light to emerge from the process of creation itself. This style, familiar to us through the works of Borduas, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Marcelle Ferron and other members of the group, preceded the similar work of the American abstract expressionists by a few years. Unlike the Americans, however, they saw their work as political – a paradox given that such art, with its lack of thematic content and its often savage explosion of joy and erotic liberation, is seen today as the ideal decoration for corporate head offices and the homes of the wealthy. For them, their experiments with colour, space, and form were precisely the opposite of abstractions – they were seen as a way of "making matter sing," unlocking the secrets of the material world and the unconscious, and thus breaking down the dualisms of spirit and matter, mind and body, and reason and emotion. Their hope was that the spectator, challenged in the very depths of the psyche by the mystery of these works, would begin to experience the process of individual change and growth necessary for the eventual transformation of culture.

Automatist works can be seen as landscapes of the soul ... cries for freedom in the midst of darkness and bursts of fresh air in a suffocating space.

Because of their abstract, nonfigurative nature, the works of the Automatists have rarely if ever been analyzed in terms of their relation with Quebec society. But the dark tonalities of many of the paintings and the violence with which the paint was thrown onto the canvas seem to reflect the artists' sense of struggle with a repressive society. Critics at the time commented negatively on how dark and confusing these paintings were, but in fact their most obvious common denominator was the sense they conveyed of a search for light (Borduas in his teaching insisted that the essence of a painting could be found in "the quality of the light that illuminates the objects"). Marcelle Ferron, the only woman among the painters in the group, has commented that they were all "landscape painters in the broadest sense of the term, portraying the relationship of human beings to their geographical space and its light." As well, not only the paintings but the dance and literary works were explosions of joy and eroticism, both savage and repressed. Taken together, the Automatist works can be seen as landscapes of the soul and of an era – cries for freedom in the midst of darkness and bursts of fresh air in a suffocating space.

Most members of the public were probably totally unaware of these new artistic experiments. But Françoise Riopelle's description of the reactions of members of her own family and that of her husband Jean-Paul Riopelle gives a sense of how threatening these works must have been for a population nourished on the reassuring dogmas of family, religion, and government authority. She recalls that her aunt called Jean-Paul Riopelle's works "the paintings of the devil," and that the painter's mother actually destroyed a number of Automatist paintings during a period in 1947 when the young couple were living in her home. The Automatists became

Break permanently with the customs of society, disassociate yourself from its utilitarian values. Refuse to live knowingly beneath the level of our psychic potential. Refuse to close your eyes to the vices, the frauds perpetrated under the guise of knowledge, of services rendered, of favours repaid. Refuse to live in the isolation of the artistic ghetto, a place fortified but too easily shunted aside. Refuse to be silent – make of us what you please, but you must understand us – refuse glory, honours (the first compromise): those stigmata of the 'nuisance', the unconcerned, the servile. Refuse to serve, to be made use of for such ends. Refuse every **intention**, pernicious weapon of **reason**. Down with both of them; put them behind us. **Make way for magic!** Make way for objective mysteries!

Make way for love!
Make way for the real necessities!

Au château d'Argol, 1947 by Marcel Barbeau. Barbeau's freeform, all-over paintings would evolve to a more geometric style. The artist is also a sculptor and filmmaker.

THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, PURCHASE, SAUVE AND SAMUEL BRONFMAN COLLECTION OF CANADIAN ART / PHOTO: THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BRIAN MERRETT, WITH THANKS TO MARCEL BARBEAU

MARCELLE FERRON

La vie en fleurs entre mes cils (Life in Flower Before my Eyes), by Marcelle Ferron, 1945. The paintings of Marcelle Ferron were known for their vibrant colours and free-flowing forms. The only woman among the Automatist painters, Ferron would later apply these elements to large, stained-glass installations that embellish many of Montreal's public spaces.

fully aware of the huge gap that separated them from most members of their society (and even of the artistic world) on the evening of May 20, 1947, when their presentation of an avant-garde play by Claude Gauvreau was literally laughed off the stage by the audience. For Borduas, this evening was a major turning point, leading to his decision to confront society through the publication of a manifesto.

Printed up in four hundred mimeographed copies by members of the group, with a cover designed by Jean-Paul Riopelle, *Refus global* was not only a cry of rebellion against Quebec society, but a utopian call for the transformation of a world exhausted by rationalism and the technological domination of nature. It opened with a description of the French-Canadian people – "a small and humble people clutching the skirts of priests who have become the sole guardians of faith, knowledge, truth and our national heritage" – and the historical reasons for their present state of alienation. It then listed the various fears that kept the population in thrall:

fear of prejudice – of public opinion – of persecution – of general reprobation

Pavane, by Jean-Paul Riopelle. 1954, (300 x 550 cm) triptych. The internationally renowned Riopelle, arguably Canada's best-known artist of the twentieth century, has lived in Paris since 1948.

fear of being alone without God or a society that inevitably isolates us
fear of ourselves – of our brothers – of poverty
fear of the established order – of absurd laws
fear of new relationships ...
fear of opening the floodgates to our faith in man

This alienation was not presented as solely a Quebec problem, however. It was also attributed to the larger culture, which the manifesto describes as exhausted and inhabited by an apocalyptic violence, most recently revealed to the world in the postwar discovery of the horrors of the Nazi death camps. Exhaustion and violence were presented as the two sides of a profound split in Western culture, which since the Middle Ages had reason prevailing over emotion, spontaneity, eroticism, and magic: "Our reason has allowed us to conquer the world, but it is a world in which we have lost our unity."

Many political movements in later generations have tried to claim *Refus global* as an expression of their own ideals. For example, Quebec nationalists of the 1960s saw in it a precursor of their own revolt, and Marxists and socialists admired its critique of capitalism. But in spite of its clear identification of the alliance between capitalism, technology, and church power that perpetuated the status quo, the manifesto was neither nationalist nor socialist. Borduas and the other signatories dissociated themselves from the conservative nationalism that had dominated Quebec culture for so long ("To hell with holy water and the tuque," they wrote), but they were just as cynical about the possibility of a left-wing revolution bringing about any real change ("As if a change of class meant a change of civilization, a change of desires and hopes"). The revolution they called for – an affirmation of the potential of each individual in society and the joyful transformation of the world through art – is probably best described as anarchist or utopian. It is probably this ability to resist being captured by any one ideology that explains why the manifesto, like the art of the Automatists, still speaks to us with such urgency and authenticity today.

Patricia Smart is a professor of French at Carleton University in Ottawa. The winner of the Governor General's Award for her book *Écrire dans la maison du père*, a feminist study of Quebec literature, Dr. Smart is also the author of the just-released *Les femmes du Refus global* (Les Editions du Boréal, Montreal, 1998, 336 pages).

Not long after an Englishman scaled the Matterhorn in 1865 and inspired the sport of mountaineering, every Alp that mattered had been conquered. Europeans and Americans sought fresh challenges, and the Canadian Rockies, unlocked by the CPR, provided them in abundance. But then one young climber fell to his death. His peers were shocked into action. In Canada, a new era in mountaineering began.

The Legend of Lefroy

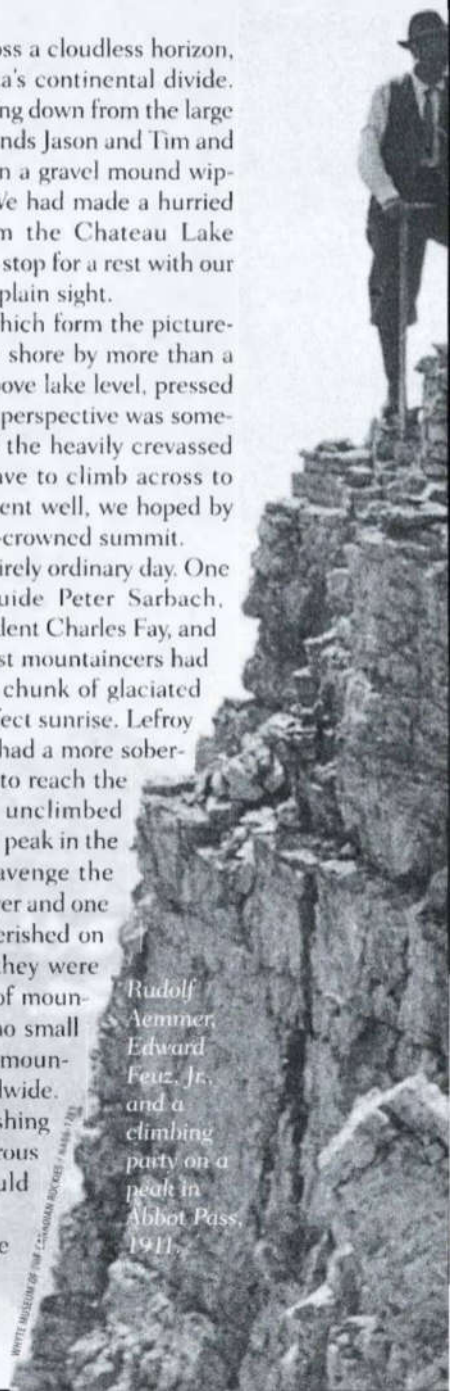
by Matt Jackson

The first rays of dawn cut across a cloudless horizon, snagging the spine of Alberta's continental divide. Despite the cold breath wafting down from the large glaciers in front of us, my friends Jason and Tim and I found ourselves standing on a gravel mound wiping sweat from our brows. We had made a hurried ascent under starlight from the Chateau Lake Louise, and as morning broke, we decided to stop for a rest with our objectives – Mounts Lefroy and Victoria – in plain sight.

We stared up at these two mountains, which form the picture-perfect backdrop to Lake Louise, seen from shore by more than a million visitors every year. But 365 metres above lake level, pressed close to these towering stone monoliths, our perspective was somewhat different. We had a bird's-eye view of the heavily crevassed lower Victoria Glacier, which we would have to climb across to reach the base of the peaks. If everything went well, we hoped by late morning to stand on Mount Lefroy's ice-crowned summit.

It was August 3, 1997, a perfect, if not entirely ordinary day. One hundred years ago to the hour, Swiss guide Peter Sarbach, Appalachian Mountain Club of Boston President Charles Fay, and a carefully selected handful of the world's best mountaineers had found themselves traversing this very same chunk of glaciated terrain, their eyes adjusting to a similarly perfect sunrise. Lefroy had also been their goal, though their climb had a more sobering undertone. They were not merely trying to reach the 3,429-metre-high summit of a previously unclimbed peak – at the time the highest of any surveyed peak in the British Empire – they were attempting to avenge the death of Philip Abbot, a young American lawyer and one of the era's finest mountaineers, who had perished on Lefroy's flanks the previous year. As well, they were attempting to prove to critics that the sport of mountaineering could be practised safely. It was no small chore. Abbot's death, North America's first mountaineering fatality, had shocked people worldwide. In an era when physical hardship was diminishing in people's lives, the sport was deemed dangerous and unnecessary. The average person would gladly have seen it banned.

Climbing in the Rockies at the end of the



Rudolf Aemmer, Edward Feuz, Jr., and a climbing party on a peak in Abbot Pass, 1911.

WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES / NA66-1783

twentieth century, however, my friends and I were in different circumstances. We had detailed maps, guidebooks with route descriptions, and equipment and clothing mountaineers a hundred years ago wouldn't have been able to comprehend: breathable Gore-Tex clothing, non-flex plastic boots, and specially forged metal foot crampons (spikes attached to a boot to prevent slipping) for ascending steep snow and ice. Technology had turned a daredevil pursuit into a popular pastime. Today, mountaineering is a widely accepted, even somewhat trendy, form of outdoor recreation.

What hasn't changed, of course, are the hazards associated with certain sections of the historic route to Mounts Lefroy and Victoria, particularly the ever-present danger of falling ice climbers encounter through the Death Trap above the the heavily crevassed lower Victoria Glacier. Swiss guide Edward Feuz Jr., a successor to Sarbach, used to call the Death Trap the most dangerous place in the Canadian Rockies. At any time of the day, and at any time of the year, gargoyles of hanging glacier ice can break free and tumble down into the belly of the Trap, steamrolling anything in their path. On a descent of the Trap the previous year, two friends and I had passed a minivan-sized chunk of ice that had fallen and bounced for several hundred metres, marking its path with a series of man-crushing divots.

Needless to say, it's always a relief to move through the hazards of the Death Trap and to reach the top of Abbot Pass, the high saddle that joins the west face of Lefroy with Victoria's southeast ridge. From the mound where we enjoyed our morning break, we could see the pass, but could detect no movement from another group of more than a dozen climbers organized by Canadian Pacific Hotels, also on hand to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the achievement of Sarbach and Fay. They had ascended from the less hazardous British Columbia side

MATT JACKSON / SUMMIT

(left) The Victoria Glacier and Mount Lefroy

The steep, shifting glacier ice of the Death Trap (right) is still hazardous for modern day climbers.

of Mount Lefroy to the small stone hut at Abbot Pass the previous day. By doing so, they had put themselves in the best possible position to reach the summit that morning.

Celebrating the centennial of the first ascent, however, was not the only reason to organize a special event. In 1997 Canadian Pacific planned to relaunch its historic guiding programs at its mountain hotels. As a symbolic gesture, the group of mountaineers planned to replant Peter Sarbach's historic ice axe on Lefroy's summit, followed by an ascent of Victoria two days later. It was fitting: early guides had opened the grand heights of Canada's mountains to an unfamiliar public, and Sarbach was the first professional mountain guide to visit Canada.

It was getting late by the time Philip Abbot and his American colleagues George Little, Charles Fay, and Charles Thompson clambered onto the final rock precipice guarding Mount Lefroy's summit. August 3, 1896 had been a beauti-

WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES / NA86-1981

Philip Abbot in 1890. His death six years later would be North America's first mountaineering fatality.

Charles Fay, George Little, and Willoughby Astley attempting to recover the body of Philip Abbot. Foul weather delayed their grim task for a week.

Charles Fay, a professor of modern languages at Harvard University and president of the Appalachian Mountain Club of Boston, witnessed Abbot's death in 1896 and helped lead a successful assault on Mount Lefroy the following year.

With the west face of Lefroy rising in the background, a present-day alpinist negotiates the narrow ridge of Mount Victoria. The west face of Lefroy, where Philip Abbot fell to his death in 1896, was the site of the successful ascent of the mountain one year later.

Peter Sarbach, George Percival Baker, and John Norman Collie at the Banff Springs Hotel, 1897. They were members of the Anglo-American team that made the first ascent of Lefroy.

WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES / V-4

WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES / NA86-37

ful day in the Canadian Rockies. The weather had allowed the group to progress as close to Lefroy's elusive high point as any party ever had. Now, with less than sixty metres to climb, the alpinists had to make a critical decision—go for the top and risk getting stranded on the mountain under darkness, or turn back, leaving unconquered one of the world's most sought-after summits. Pushing their luck late in the day could have dire consequences, they realized, especially since they had left all of their extra supplies nearly six hundred metres down on the mountain.

Indeed, if it weren't for Abbot's confidence and enthusiasm, the group might well have turned around. But keen-eyed Abbot scouted ahead and found a vertical cleft he thought might allow them through the steep wall of rock. He asked the others to unrope and take cover from falling rocks while he climbed some nine metres up. Taking a belay stance, a body position intended to secure his partner on the opposite end of the rope in case of a slip, he called for Little to follow him, leaving Fay and Thompson to wait their turn at the bottom.

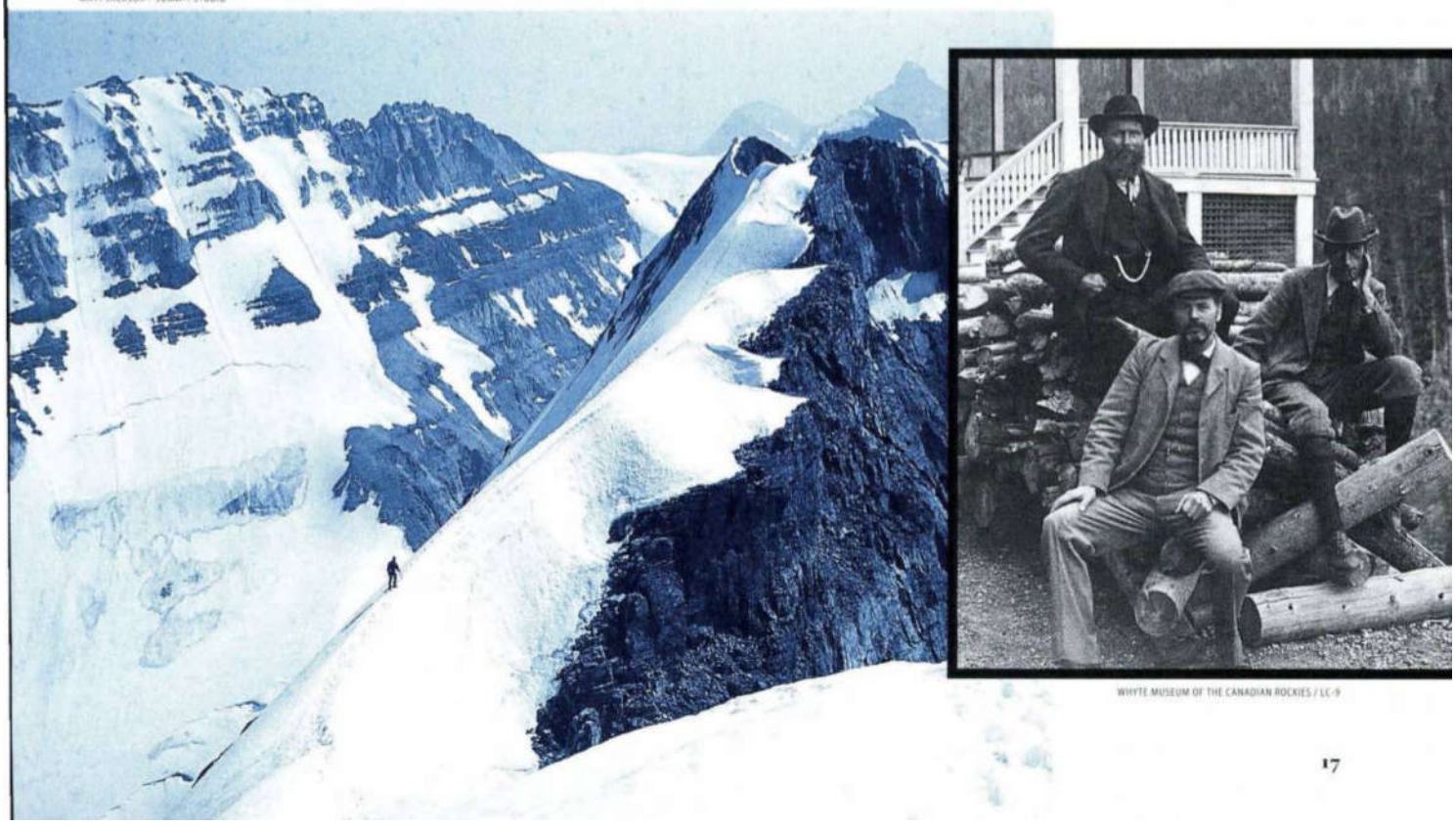
A couple of minutes later from their perch, Abbot and Little turned and scanned the fortified walls for the next plausible lead. Abbot continued traversing across to his left and found a rock gully leading higher. When Little queried his comrade about trying a different approach, Abbot called back: "I think not. I have a good lead here." Seconds later, as Little continued scanning for an alternative, he felt something whirl past him. With a sickening thud, Abbot struck the ice slope head first, a mere five metres from Thompson and Fay. Then, with nothing to stop him, he bounced down Lefroy's steep west face with the rope spooling around his body.

Abbot's companions, already pressed to their limits, were horrified at the sight of their friend's horrendous plunge. The three were desperate to help Abbot, but they were still on dangerous ground and needed their full concentration to descend Lefroy's steep ice slopes safely. Reaching Abbot took several hours—they found him alive, but with a deep wound to the back of his head. Unsure of the injury's seriousness, the men freed Abbot of the rope and began carrying him toward the pass. Several moments later he died in their arms. Grief-stricken, the men left Abbot's body on the mountain, and hurried down in search of their stashed supplies, which they were unable to find. They were forced to spend a miserable night huddled together behind the stone cairn marking the top of the pass, intermittently hugging each other and pounding themselves to keep warm.

It was a week before Fay, Little, and Thompson, accompanied by local outfitter Tom Wilson (discoverer of Lake Louise), Willoughby Astley (manager of the Lake Louise chalet), and several railway bridge builders were able to fend off spindrift avalanches and foul weather to recover Abbot's body from Lefroy. It took them all day just to move their lifeless friend through the Death Trap. Finally, on August 8, Abbot's body arrived back at the shores of Lake Louise.

After Abbot was laid to rest in Boston, word of the accident leaked out quickly, leaving his companions with the disenchanting task of trying to explain the

MATT JACKSON / SUMMIT STUDIO



WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES / LC-9

incident. In 1865, after four climbers plunged to their deaths from the Matterhorn under the leadership of British mountaineer Edward Whymper, there had been an outcry against the dangerous sport. This time, however, criticism shifted from Switzerland to Canada's wild and uncharted mountains. Ironically, the attention Mount Lefroy received in the wake of Abbot's death, accompanied by Fay's eloquent defence of his sport, ensured an expedition the following year to conquer the mountain's summit. In particular, Abbot's father, keen to prove that Lefroy could be conquered, called on Peter Sarbach, his son's European guide, to join Fay's party and lead a group of the world's finest alpinists, including pioneer John Norman Collie of Himalayan climbing fame and Harold Bailey Dixon of Britain's Alpine Club, on an assault against the peak. As Robert Sandford notes in his book, *The Canadian Alps*, "this Anglo-American expedition formed as formidable a team of climbers as could be composed at that time." In the face of this major international climbing effort, Lefroy's summit was expected to fall.

Thus, on the morning of August 3, 1897, exactly one year after Abbot's fatal plunge from Lefroy, the intrepid group of mountaineers gathered along the shores of Lake Louise. After rowing across the glass surface of the lake under a brilliant canopy of stars, the men followed the tumbling creek bed up through lodgepole pine to the toe of the lower Victoria Glacier. Events went strictly according to plan, and by eight o'clock that morning they found themselves at the top of what is now Abbot Pass. After roping into parties of three, the climbers progressively kicked and cut steps up the steep snow, reaching Lefroy's pinnacle at the early hour of eleven. With this successful ascent, along with the first ascent of Mount Victoria two days later, a new era of climbing in the Canadian Rockies began.

It wasn't long afterward that the railway hotels realized how valuable professional guides could be. The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 had opened the Selkirk and Rocky Mountains, and they became some of the first ranges on the North American continent to be systematically explored for their mountaineering possibilities. There were plenty of rich tourists with alpine ambitions to match their pocketbooks, but, unfortunately, they often lacked experience, and as Abbot's mishap indicated, accidents could happen all too easily climbing in the Rockies. To ensure the safety of guests who wanted to explore beyond the valley floors and avoid the bad publicity an accident would create, the hotels decided, in the summer of 1899, to import the Bergführers, a nickname for the experienced Swiss guides Christian Hasler and Edouard Feuz Sr.

Both Hasler and Feuz were hired by the Canadian Pacific Railway and stationed at Glacier House below Rogers Pass in the Selkirk Mountains in southeastern British Columbia. Their services were to be an experiment, to see if hotel patrons would make good use of their skills. As it turned out, the presence of the guides opened up countless exploration opportunities for those devoid of any mountain experience, making it plausible for any reasonably fit person to step off the train and receive a safe and relatively inexpensive introduction to alpine climbing among the world's grandest mountain cathedrals.

By 1901, the railway had hired several more Swiss guides. With all of the virgin summits in Europe previously conquered, the Canadian mountains were increasingly attractive to wealthy overseas tourists, and mountaineering in both the Rockies and the Selkirks swelled in popularity. The same year, Edward Whymper visited the Rockies as a guest of the CPR, which was eager for the British mountaineer to tackle giant Mount Assiniboine (3,618 metres), an as-yet-unclimbed peak south of Banff that had become known as the Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies. The railway hoped publicity from Whymper's ascent would create an onslaught of business at their hotels. The Rockies' Matterhorn did indeed fall that summer, but no thanks to the aging Whymper, who reportedly had a serious drinking problem. It was young, energetic James Outram, an English vicar, accompanied by Hasler and another Swiss guide, Christian Bohren, who reached the summit – the highest peak yet climbed in Canada.

Before long, the race was on to reach the summits of all of Canada's unclimbed mountains. And the railway guides were key. Their clients would take the first ascent credits, but their achievements – and their safe passage – depended on the skills of their guides. Edward Feuz Jr., along with such names as Rudolf Aemmer and Conrad Kain, soon rose to the forefront of the North American climbing community. These men had superb climbing skills and mountaineering sense, and many of them proved to be colourful characters and campfire storytellers as well. Little wonder they were in high demand.

Technique in the early twentieth century was largely self-developed, equipment very rudimentary, and clothing little more than that worn on the street. Today, considering what they had to work with, it seems incredible that some of the first ascents were made without incident. In 1912, Feuz and Aemmer led a terrified American, Howard Palmer, and friends to the summit of Mount Sir Sandford, at 3,522 metres the highest peak in the Selkirk Mountains. Palmer and party had failed on five previous attempts to ascend this dangerous mountain, and would have failed again without the skills of two competent guides.

Then, in 1913, guide Conrad Kain of the Canadian National Railway made the first ascent up the steep northeast face of imposing Mount Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies at 3,954 metres.

MATT JACKSON / SUMMIT STUDIO

Built in 1922, twenty-five years after Lefroy's first ascent, Abbot Pass Hut was made a National Historic Site in 1997. For many years it was the highest habitable structure in Canada.

After chopping more than six hundred steps up the steep ice face, while exposed to the constant threat of falling rocks and cornice collapse, Kain led his two clients through a difficult series of snow and ice walls to the top. When they finally reached the summit an exhausting thirteen hours after leaving their camp, he turned, smiled at his companions, and said: "Gentlemen, that's as far as I can take you."

Mountaineering reached its heyday in the 1920s, even though most of the significant first ascents had already been made. While guides searched further afield for virgin summits, mountains such as Lefroy and Victoria became well-travelled trademark routes. To make these two popular climbing routes even more accessible, the CPR decided to build a shelter at Abbot Pass. This would allow climbing parties safe haven between Chateau Lake Louise and the two mountain summits so they would not have to complete these long routes in a single day. In 1922, the railway hired its guides for construction of the CPR cabin (now known as the Abbot Pass Hut), which for many years after remained the highest habitable structure in Canada.

Convenient as the cabin was when completed, it was far from convenient to build. Although the rock used for the hut's walls was quarried from the surrounding peaks, the guides had to haul more than two tons of timber and other furnishings up the Death Trap by hand. The heaviest items were dragged up on sleds, or hauled using a hand winch. Their efforts proved more than worth it, however. The cabin has served both guides and clients well for many decades. Though it's been renovated several times since, the cabin is still used by alpine climbers today as a base for tackling the well-established routes on Lefroy and Victoria. Indeed, perhaps above anything else, this hut is the single most tangible legacy left by these men of the mountains, a timeless symbol of the skill, determination, and courage that opened Canada's mountains to the world.

By the time my friends and I reached the bottom of Abbot Pass on the day of the centennial, the sun had found us. We stopped to don our crampons and harnesses, and to rope up for the long, arduous trudge through the Death Trap. One hundred years ago, climbers would have kicked snow steps with hobnailed boots, and carried wood-handled alpenstocks to stop themselves from slipping. They would have belayed each other with hemp ropes tied around their waists to protect against a fatal plunge into any one of numerous crevasses hidden under snow cover. They must have been brave. Even with our more sophisticated form-fitting harnesses and lightweight ropes, we were feeling a great deal of trepidation as we weaved our way through the minefield of deep cracks.

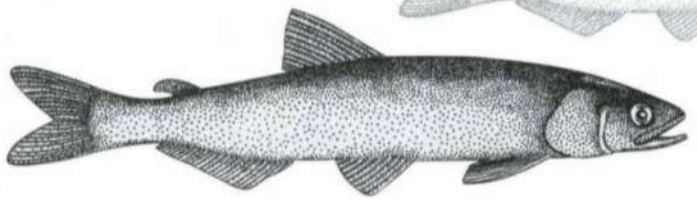
As we laboured up the steep incline, the glacier above us rumbled indignantly. With morning sun also comes morning thaw, and soon shards of rock and ice were showering from the steep east face of Mount Victoria down into the Death Trap. We seemed to be making reasonable progress, but a mere two hundred metres from the top we suddenly came to the edge of a gigantic yawning crevasse cleaving across the entire width of the slope. How would we get to the top now? We examined our choices, but we had only one option and it was too risky: We would have to traverse along the exposed east face of Mount Victoria on rotten, sun-warmed snow, and with nowhere to place a solid anchor, falling rocks might well hit one of us by chance, leading to a fatal tumble into the chasm below.

The three of us stared up at Lefroy with disbelief. None of us wished to follow in Abbot's footsteps. The irony seemed almost too much to bear: One hundred years after the first successful ascent of Lefroy, and with all the odds stacked in our favour, we were unable to retrace this historic route. Above us, we could see two members of the Canadian Pacific party standing outside the Abbot Pass Hut in the morning light. With us unable to reach the top of the pass, much less Lefroy's summit, they were the ones who would have the honour of replanting Sarbach's ice axe on Lefroy's summit. I waved to them as we turned around to descend to Chateau Lake Louise. Although my heart felt hollow, in some ways it was oddly satisfying to know that Lefroy's summit can still be elusive.

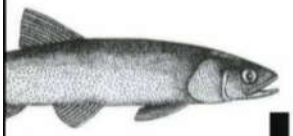
Matt Jackson is a freelance journalist and avid climber living in Calgary, where easy access to the mountains sometimes makes concentrating on work difficult. He has contributed to more than a dozen Canadian magazines. This is his first article for the *Beaver*.

While the celebrated salmon faces troubled times on the West Coast, another, lesser-known fish – the eulachon – flourishes along the Nass River valley in northwestern B.C. Harvested for countless generations by the Nisga'a, this small fish has qualities more remarkable than the average member of the smelt family, and native people once came from far and wide to trade for it. Today, the spring eulachon run remains as indispensable a part of Nisga'a culture as ever.

Catching the Saviour Fish



by Tom Koppel



I huddle in the cold March drizzle with ten Nisga'a Indians on the deck of their boat. We're at anchor on the lower reaches of the Nass River in northwestern British Columbia, just east of the Alaska Panhandle. Within shouting distance are ten or more aluminum skiffs, flat-bottomed punts, and sleek outboard runabouts – and another two dozen fishermen. The Nisga'a wait, as they have done each spring for thousands of years, for millions of small eulachon to arrive on the incoming tide. In the distance, clouds of seagulls advance slowly upriver, heralding their approach.

Suddenly the gulls are upon us. Their shrill cries fill the air as they whirl and dive for the fish. I duck out of the way as the men jump to their tasks. With deft teamwork, pairs of boats play out cone-shaped nets thirty metres long, like giant nylon stockings, in the silty gray water, then spread them between stout hemlock poles driven into the river bottom. Within minutes, the eulachon are swimming into the nets.

On the nearest cluster of boats, two men use a long, wooden hook to pull the last few metres of their net, filled with fish, to the surface. Wielding a shorter hook, another man works a manageable bulge of fish down to the end of the net. Then two others lift it over the gunwale of a skiff and release a slipknot. Hundreds of slim, silvery fish, flashing and jumping, slide out at their feet. Working quickly, the men keep squeezing fish along the net, like toothpaste in a tube, as masses of them surge all the while into the submerged mouth of the net.

As the first full skiffs wallow to the riverbank to unload, empty boats dart into position at the nets. The roar of outboard motors echoes off the nearby hillside. For three hours, until slack tide, the Nisga'a race to harvest their most precious food resource.

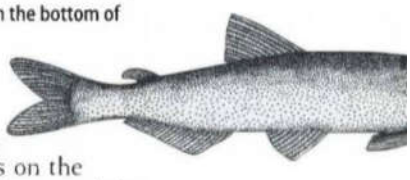
My visit to the Nass River took place a decade ago, but little about the fishery has changed since then. Although eulachon runs have declined in recent years on many B.C. rivers – scientists think this is due to a changing ocean climate and habitat degradation – on the Nass the harvest is still abundant. Unlike salmon, the eulachon have never been fished heavily enough to be depleted. Last spring, with dozens of

PHOTOS TOM KOPPEL

Clockwise from upper left: Early morning crews set nets and wait for fish. Then, when the nets are filled, fishermen use a long wooden hook to pull the bottom of the net toward the surface. But eulachon fill the nets with such speed and in such abundance that while fishermen are releasing fish from the bottom of the net onto the boat, more fish are surging into the mouth of the net still submerged in the water.

adults and children participating, the Nisga'a took roughly two hundred tonnes of fish, enough for every interested family to enjoy a big feast of fresh eulachon and lay in a supply of the rendered "grease" that is their favourite condiment.

Fifteen to twenty-five centimetres long, the eulachon, *Thaleichthys pacificus* (or *saak* in the Nisga'a language), is a smelt so rich in oil it is also called the "candlefish" because when dried and fitted with a wick it was burned by natives for lighting. From mid-March through the end of April, in runs lasting a week or two, eulachon (also spelled *oolichan*) swarm into the large mainland rivers of the Pacific coast from northern California to the Bering Sea. Each female deposits thousands of sticky eggs on the river sandbars, males fertilize them, then both sexes die. Within four or five weeks the eggs hatch and the current sweeps the tiny offspring out to sea. They return in two or three years as mature fish ready to repeat the eternal cycle.



Since long before living memory, the fish has meant life itself to natives on the B.C. coast. "They were our first fresh harvest of the year," late Nisga'a elder Henry McKay told me when I visited the Nass. "They came when our people were at the end of their winter food supply of dried fish, seaweed, roots, and berries. So we named it the Saviour Fish."

Nisga'a cosmology links the creation of daylight to the valuable eulachon resource. W'iigat was their legendary hero, trickster, and miracle worker. According to the oral tradition, it was in a contest with the ghost people for access to the Nass eulachon that W'iigat released light into the world.

To open the eulachon season the local chief went to a special spot on the river, dipped in his hand-held net, and addressed a prayer to the fish to ensure a

Upper left: Fishing camp along the Nass River at the turn of the century. Note the dozens of racks of drying eulachon.

Lower right: The method of ripening the fish remains unchanged. As they have for centuries, the Nisga'a leave the eulachon to decompose in a large pit for periods of up to three weeks (depending on weather conditions). This releases the fish oil, making it easier to render.

Inset right: Then, as now, ripened fish would be simmered in water in large wooden pots for hours, then allowed to cool. The layer of pure oil left on top would be later skimmed. (Today, the fish residue is spread on gardens as fertilizer.)

Lower left: To extract more oil, the fish residue was placed in an open-meshed container and squeezed with a lever on a flat stone.

Above: Shore camp at Fishery Bay, shared by Nisga'a from the entire valley during the six weeks of eulachon harvest.

bountiful harvest. Each fisherman followed with a prayer of gratitude to his first netful of fish. The natives were careful not to offend the spirit of the eulachon by stepping on the fish or treating their remains with disrespect.

In good years the catch was enormous. A century ago each family took five to ten tonnes for its own use every year. After gorging on fresh fish and smoking or drying a portion, they rendered the bulk into a rich, concentrated oil they called grease. Kept cool, it could be stored for at least five years.

Northwest coast peoples relished this high energy grease with everything, even berries and desserts. Many of their smoked and dried foods could hardly be swallowed without the help of grease or other fish and animal oils. Grease was also used as fuel, lubricant, and medicine. In the 1870s the street lamps at Metlakatla, a native village near Prince Rupert, burned eulachon oil. The Nisga'a still use grease as a laxative and for burns, chapped hands, and colds.

Tribes that were located on eulachon rivers were fortunate, and the Nass had by far the largest eulachon fishery of all B.C. rivers. "It meant survival, power, and wealth to the Nisga'a," says Alan Moore, who has researched his people's history. "We controlled it." Others had to acquire the prized delicacy through trade. In the words of one early observer, George Chismore, writing in 1870, "By Canoe it travells [*sic*] to Sitka on the North and Puget Sound on

ROYAL BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSEUM / PN 9169

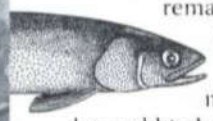
ROYAL BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSEUM / PN 1447

the South, as well as up all the navigable rivers. Inland, borne upon the backs of men, it goes, no whiteman knows how far; certainly to the Arctic Slope, traded from tribe to tribe, and becoming more costly the farther it gets from its source."

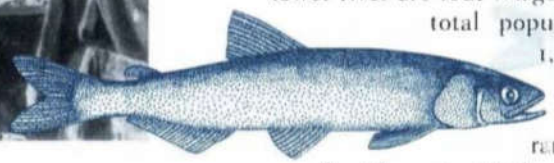
Tribes from the Interior trekked through the coastal mountains to trade rabbit, marmot, and beaver skins for the grease, making their way along narrow, well-worn "grease trails." It was along such a route to Bella Coola that explorer Alexander Mackenzie reached the Pacific by land in 1793. The grease trail to the Nass was such a major trade route that the Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Simpson at the mouth of the Nass in 1831 in an effort to capture a share of that commerce. HBC Governor George Simpson even considered exporting eulachon oil to England. He wrote: "As this oil ... was free from smell, it might be applied to many purposes in the civilised world; and I accordingly ordered a few jars of it to be sent to London by way of sample."

An important form of wealth, grease was given away by chiefs at the potlatch feasts that marked special events. The ultimate potlatch was the so-called grease feast, at which the host chief would pour eulachon oil into the central fire of his longhouse. His scorched guests were obliged to sit nearby feigning calm and disinterest, even if the flames set the roof on fire. As recently as 1947, the host of a Kwakiutl potlatch gave away 600 four-gallon cans of grease. The tradition continues. A few years ago, when the Nisga'a and neighbouring Tsimshian signed a resource-sharing agreement, they exchanged gifts at a public celebration. The Nisga'a bestowed a large jar of eulachon grease on each Tsimshian chief.

In the late nineteenth century, a few white entrepreneurs built factories to exploit the eulachon fishery, but by the First World War most of the businesses had failed. Eulachon were not suited to canning. And grease never caught on as a food outside native society. Today, coastal natives rely on the eulachon less than they once did. But the Nisga'a have kept their traditional fishery alive. For them, the annual run remains a defining event in their way of life, as I discovered when I drove the rutted road from Terrace 100 kilometres north to the isolated Nass Valley and hitched a boat ride down the river.



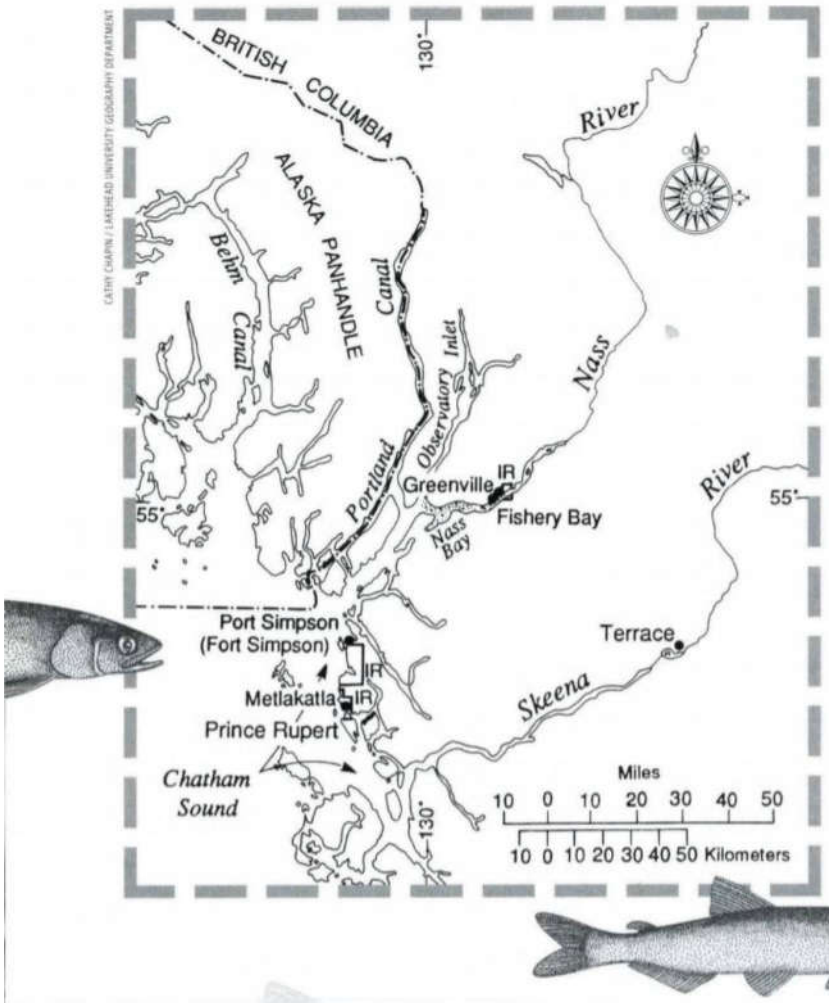
The Nass River slashes 350 kilometres through wooded wilderness, crowned by jagged white peaks, before reaching the Pacific. Widely spaced along the lower river are four Nisga'a villages with a total population of about 1,700. Twenty-two kilometres above the mouth is the ramshackle seasonal settlement at Fishery Bay. Accessible only by boat, it is used by Nisga'a from the entire valley for six weeks each year – and only then – during the eulachon harvest.



I counted five camps on the bay. Each was run by a company of relatives and friends who pooled their labour and equipment and shared in the catch. (The same five companies operate camps today, and there is a sixth camp close to the mouth of the river that is used by the Tsimshian.) The camps were no-nonsense hamlets of weathered, wood-frame houses and fish-processing sheds. Boats flitted back and forth between the nets and riverside floats. Chainsaws droned. Kids in gumboots romped along the muddy riverbank. Wood smoke drifted from every chimney.

Before powerboats simplified travel, nearly the entire population of the Nass Valley would move to Fishery Bay each February. Early missionaries estimated that 5,000 Indians – Nisga'a and visitors – gathered on the river each spring. Within living memory, it was still a huge seasonal village.

Horace Stevens, the head of one of the companies, took a break from handling his net to recall the



encampment in the 1930s and 1940s, when he was a child. He used to move downriver with his parents almost a month before the eulachon run to get the camp ready:

> I helped bring in the firewood. It was real nice. There were boardwalks the length of the bay, with bridges over the creeks, stores, and a big hall for gatherings. We even had constables to keep down rowdiness, and three big churches. On the Sabbath we didn't fish or even chop wood. Everyone went to church. Indians from Alaska used to come down to the Nass for grease and fresh eulachon. They had a store onboard a big old schooner and traded us boots, clothing, rifles, all sorts of goods. That's how important eulachon was to us.

Stevens was proud that both of his sons had become involved in the fishery. "If I don't teach my children," he said, "they won't care later on." There was also the practical side. Young married men, he said, were finding it hard to get work in the valley, where logging is almost the only industry. But there never seems to be a shortage of eulachon. "You need lots of grub, eh? Well, this provides you with a lot of Indian food. You salt it, smoke it, dry it. Then you get the oil, which you can sell. Some trade it for as much as seventy dollars a gallon."

I went ashore to look in on one of the camps and met Jim Moore, a burly logger who looked forward to taking a month off each year to fish eulachon. His attachment to Fishery Bay was special. "I was born here," he said, and pointed to a tall spruce where his grandfather's house once stood. A big pot was brewing on the wood stove in the camp's spartan house. "Pour yourself a cup," said Moore. "Even the coffee tastes better here."

Alan Moore, his cousin, showed me a log-walled bin the size and depth of a small swimming pool. It was already half full of fish. Two teenage boys lugged a heavy box of eulachon up a planked walkway from the river and dumped them in. "We'll work every tide until it's full," said Moore. Some forty tonnes of fish would be allowed to ripen for one to three weeks. This releases the oil, making it easier to render. The stench can be offensive to outsiders, but camp workers don't mind. "You get used to it," Moore chuckled, "just like the white man's polluted cities."

Near the bin stood two mammoth rectangular wooden pots with steel-plate bottoms, in which each partner in the company was going to cook his share of grease once the harvest was over. Filling a pot with water and ripened fish, he builds a fire underneath and stirs constantly with a wooden paddle so the brew doesn't burn. Twelve hours of simmering leaves a layer of pure oil on the top. After skimming this off, the cook has forty-five to fifty gallons of grease from the smaller pot and up to seventy-five gallons from the larger one. The fish residue is spread on gardens as fertilizer.

Selected fish for smoking are skewered through the gills on long, cedar sticks and hung over an alder fire in the adjacent smokehouse. Others are sun dried, a job that has traditionally belonged to women. When the fish have ripened slightly, the fishermen's wives and daughters salt them and tie thousands of pairs of fish together at the heads, then hang them on wooden racks and leave them to the wind and sun for weeks.

One woman was minding the camp and keeping an eye on the wood fires as well as the three girls and half-dozen teenage boys of the shore crew. (The native-run Nass Valley school district coordinates spring break with the eulachon fishery, so the children can

spend a week at Fishery Bay helping out and learning about their heritage.) I caught her up to her elbows in blood as she sliced long strips of fat from a huge, meaty carcass. It was a sea lion that had followed the eulachon upriver and been shot by one of the fishing crew. Her young daughter and niece were busy hanging the blubbery strings in the smokehouse. After smoking it, she was going to pressure-seal the fat, which is considered a delicacy, in jars. "In the old days," she said, "they hung it high in the eaves of the longhouses, where smoke from the fires kept it indefinitely."

After landing over two tonnes of fish on a favourable afternoon tide, the men came in from the river to warm up, relax, and grab a bite to eat. Alongside a tray of sandwiches was a platter of dry, thinly sliced smoked salmon and a jar of clear oil. I tore off a piece of the jerky-like orange flesh, dipped it in the oil, and savoured my first taste of traditional Indian salmon and grease. The oil added a pungent flavour and offset the saltiness of the chewy fish.

At dusk the men headed back out into the blustery weather, but the evening tide was a weak one that brought few fish. After two hours the men straggled back in, cold and disappointed. They peeled off their rain gear and tucked into a late dinner: heaping platters of juicy, red sea lion steaks, which tasted like lean beef.

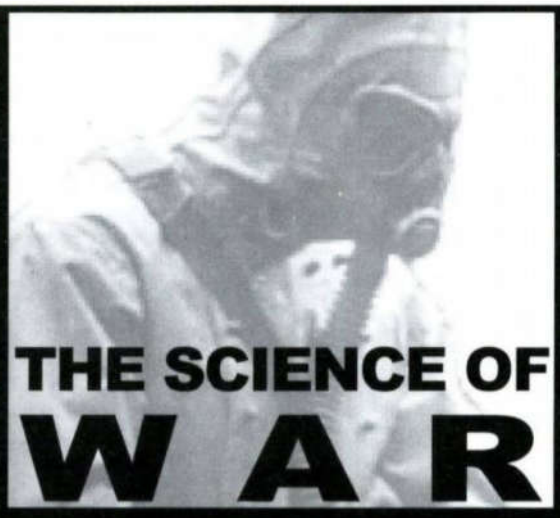
After dinner the youngsters turned in, while the adults stayed up until midnight playing word games and swapping stories. They told of hair-raising escapes while fishing the unstable river ice, of scrambling up the nearby crags to hunt mountain goats, of grizzlies coming into the camp and knocking over barrels of grease. Then they drifted off to their sleeping bags, only to drag themselves out again at five in the morning to fish the early tide.

But the weather took pity on them. The clouds dispersed, and brilliant sunlight etched the snowy ramparts of the Coast Range against a deep blue northern sky. The men worked their nets cheerfully. A few more days of good fishing and the bins would be full.

Later, I caught a ride upriver to Greenville, where the road to the outside world begins. The outboard drove us smoothly along, close to the heavily wooded riverbank. We passed under the fixed gaze of countless bald eagles, perched statuelike in tall trees, watching for fish. On other branches, strung out like black picket fences, were platoons of ravens.

In Greenville I talked to Jake McKay, a band councillor who spent twenty-five years outside the valley but eventually returned. "I felt a need to bring my children back here," he said, "to be educated in the life of a small village and in this culture." McKay was confident that the ways of his people, including the eulachon fishery, will be carried on long after he is gone. "I've told my children," he smiled, "as my grandfather told me: Those who work hard and put away as much eulachon as they can will see another season." 🏛

Tom Koppel lives on Salt Spring Island, B.C., and has been a freelance magazine feature writer for over fifteen years. His articles on the history and geography of British Columbia coast have often dealt with native peoples. He is the author of *Kanaka: The Untold Story of Hawaiian Pioneers in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest*. This is his first article for the *Beaver*.



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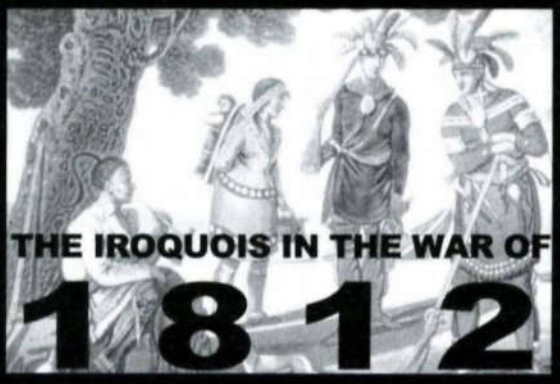
WWII, with its emphasis on innovative weapons and defence technology, brought about massive changes in the role of scientists. A cross-disciplinary overview of the scientific and military activity of this period in several countries and a fascinating analysis of what the author calls 'Big Science' in Canada.



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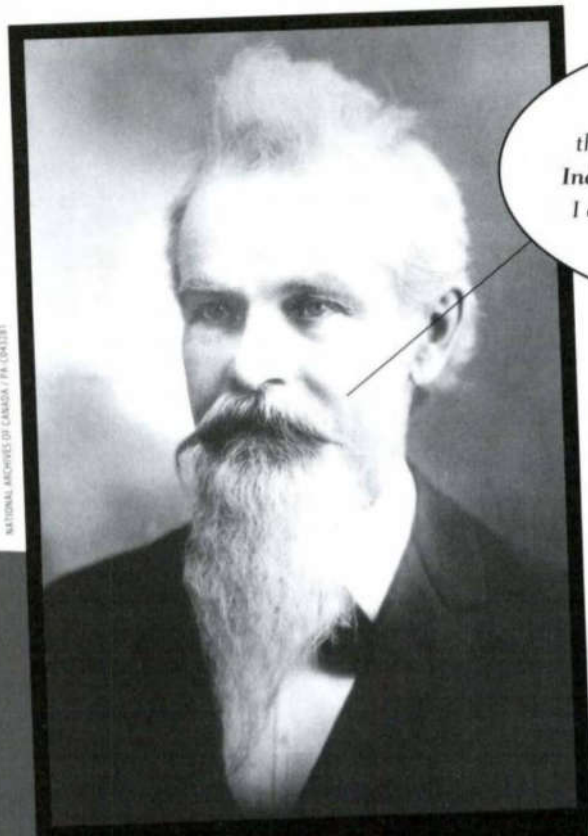


NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA / PA-134331

I present myself for your suffrages as the ***Workingmen's Candidate on Independent Principles*** *believing as I do that this is the position for the nominee of the working class.*

DANIEL O'DONOGHUE

"GRAND OLD MAN" OF CANADA'S LABOUR MOVEMENT

by Vic Parsons

Daniel O'Donoghue was a printer, leader in many early labour organizations, founding member of the Canadian Labour Union, an MPP, and, as the first Dominion fair-wages officer, a federal civil servant.

Canada's nineteenth-century growth spurt changed forever the working lives of its citizens. There were railways, canals, and cities to be built, mines to be excavated, and resources to be transformed in the new factories of English Canada. Small trade unions emerged in the middle of the century, but as industrial capitalism took hold, labour needed a unified voice. Daniel O'Donoghue, Irish-born printer and labour leader, promoted a largely American model of labour politics. Based on the notion that labour's goals could best be achieved by working through established political parties rather than independently, his moderating influence still prevails.

Consternation reigned in the ranks of Ottawa's working class in the summer of 1872. A church had been built in the new Dominion's capital. When the building was complete, the contractor took the money and ran, leaving behind a slew of unpaid masons and stonecutters.

There was little the defrauded craftsmen and labourers could do. But into the vacuum stepped working class leaders who established the Ottawa Trades Council and reached out to colleagues in Toronto to press for labour-law reform.

One of those men was Daniel John O'Donoghue, an Irish-born printer of modest means who became a confidante to two future prime ministers, Sir Wilfred Laurier and Mackenzie King. He was also the first labour representative to win election to any legislature in this country.

A few months after the Ottawa church debacle, O'Donoghue went to Toronto to rally support for a radical notion. Ontario's Reform (Liberal) government had introduced a mechanics' lien act that provided a measure of help to workers who were owed back wages. But O'Donoghue was disturbed to see an amendment proposed that would require a fifty-dollar minimum to be owed before the act would apply. This was a considerable sum for a worker, he

angrily noted. The only way justice could be assured for working people would be if they elected their own representatives to legislatures.

O'Donoghue, born in 1844 at Listry, Ireland, had come to Canada with his family at age seven. By thirteen, his father dead, the bright lad was a printer's devil with earnings of two dollars a month. His trade learned, the young man left Ottawa for Buffalo, New York, where he joined the influential International Typographical Union. After working in several other American cities, he returned home in 1866 and engaged in building the Canadian labour movement.

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, Ottawa bustled with activity that transformed a remote rural community centred on the timber trade into the capital of a new country. Skilled workmen, many just off the boat from Scotland, England, and Ireland, were erecting the magnificent buildings to be used by government. These craftsmen brought with them ideas about the place of working people in society – thoughts about the extension of the right to vote, the negotiation of wage rates, and the improvement of working conditions.

Masons, stonecutters, and carpenters organized into unions, and government demand for printing services gave impetus to the most literate of the working class, the typographers.

Local 102 of the typographers had been established with O'Donoghue's help in 1866. Three years later, the printers struck the *Ottawa Citizen* when the newspaper tried to cut wages paid to compositors who worked on contracts let by government. With the twenty-five-year-old O'Donoghue as a leader, the strike was successful, and pay of eight dollars for a sixty-hour week was maintained.

O'Donoghue was becoming well known in the capital. Besides his union-local activities, he headed a delegation of Ottawa unionists who in 1873 lobbied Prime Minister John A. Macdonald for favourable laws. In the same year, he led a strike for a nine-hour working day. That action failed when employers hired foreign printers and women who were willing to work for less to do the work. Meanwhile, the first meeting of the Canadian Labour Union, earliest predecessor of today's Canadian Labour Congress, was held in Toronto, and O'Donoghue was elected first vice-president. At the convention, it was declared that labour would try the political arena independently of the dominant Grits and Tories.

In January 1874, with a property-qualification rule for public office removed by the Ontario government, O'Donoghue and his comrades got a chance to test the electoral waters. The opening came when a provincial legislator from Ottawa resigned to take a federal patronage post, leading to a by-election in January 1874. Not yet thirty, and with little money to run a campaign, O'Donoghue was able to take advantage of a split in the ranks of the Liberals and the weakness of the Tories. The spectacle of a *mechanic* running for public office was so breathtakingly novel that the young printer found himself embraced by the then-Conservative *Citizen*. An account of one rally, headed WORKINGMEN ON THE STUMP, noted: "The workingmen are beginning to manifest an interest in political matters, a thing very unusual in the past. The working classes claim to have just as good a right to a local representative from their ranks as those holding the most lofty and exalted positions in society."

O'Donoghue's one advertisement in the newspaper read: "I present myself for your suffrages as the 'Workingmen's Candidate on Independent Principles' believing as I do that this is the position for the nominee of the working class."

But novelty alone could not have won the election for O'Donoghue. Not only was he an outsider to political circles, he was a Catholic in intolerant times when a majority of voters were Protestant. O'Donoghue likely did not expect to win. He was simply laying the groundwork for later office-seekers who sought to improve the lot of the working class.

Ottawa's first parliament buildings. The British craftsmen who built Canada's government buildings brought more than their skills to this country. They brought important ideas about the rights and roles of workers.

Still, a combination of circumstances fostered victory. The by-election was sandwiched between balloting for Ottawa's mayor and a federal general election. Hostility was intense between local Liberals and Tories, and with Conservative fortunes sliding, most supporters of that party opted to back the independent labour man, hoping to sway him to their side later. O'Donoghue held another card. In 1870, he had married Marie-Marguerite Cloutier, the daughter of a union printer, and could rely on the backing of Ottawa's French-speaking minority.

When prominent Conservatives, notably lumberman and Senator James Skead, rallied publicly to his side, O'Donoghue's election was assured – he won by

a landslide. The Conservatives celebrated gleefully, if prematurely, with a torchlight parade.

The *Citizen* took great delight in needling the defeated Grits. "This result is remarkable," the editor wrote. "Mr. O'Donoghue is a poor mechanic, who has nothing to depend upon for support but his wages. His election by an immense majority without the expenditure of a dollar by himself or his friends over a wealthy candidate backed by the ministry, shows how little sympathy the people of Ottawa have with the party which now holds the reins of power."

But by the provincial general election of 1875, O'Donoghue's independent streak had earned him political enemies in both main parties. Often, to the dismay of Tory supporters, he backed the hated Liberal government, and now the Liberals were somewhat more favorably inclined toward him.

Even George Brown's *Globe*, then Liberal but strongly anti-union, praised O'Donoghue's political conduct and commented that the labour candidate had shown a "sensible, practical tone" in debate, and "shrewd, intelligent observation." Considering that Brown had led the anti-union forces against a strike by O'Donoghue's Toronto colleagues in 1872, that was high praise from an unexpected quarter.

While O'Donoghue may have backed the Liberals in many measures, he was still too much of a loose cannon for many Grits. He had retained his executive position in the Canadian Labour Union, ensuring close ties to those he saw as his constituency. When the provincial general election came in 1875, Ottawa's Liberal mayor, J.P. Featherstone, ran against him. The labour politician stoutly maintained his independence, insisting he was the direct representative of the Ottawa Trades Council.

O'Donoghue ... wanted restrictions on immigration, but he also lobbied for equal wages for equal work for women; free, compulsory education; and the establishment of a federal labour and statistics department.

The Liberal *Ottawa Times* was surprisingly neutral. "We do not ask Reformers to support Mr. O'Donoghue, but it is perfectly clear they could do a great deal worse. ... This is clearly a case where half a loaf is better than none."

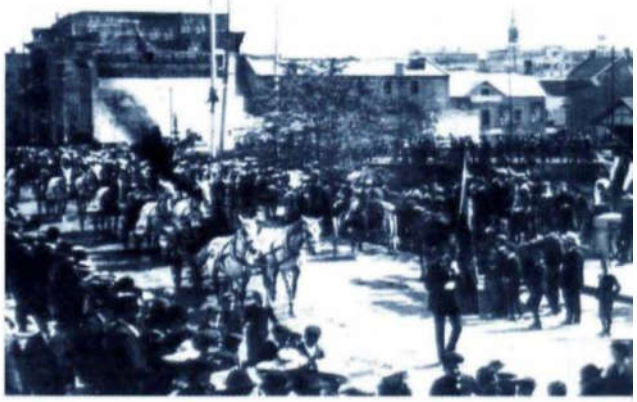
Critics in each party charged that the labour candidate was a secret adherent of the other. But when the smoke cleared, O'Donoghue had squeezed out a victory by fifty-three votes, defeating both Featherstone and a formidable Tory candidate, the former federal minister John O'Connor.

Now depression wreaked havoc upon organized labour. The economic woes that beset Canada in the late 1870s and the departure of many tradesmen after completion of the Parliament Buildings eroded the ranks of his supporters. Though nominally independent, O'Donoghue was by 1879 so firmly in the Liberal camp that Ontario premier Oliver Mowat urged Ottawa Grits to embrace him as their candidate. Mowat's entreaties were in vain, and in the 1879 provincial election O'Donoghue was soundly defeated, finishing third to his opponents.

His legislative career over, O'Donoghue stayed in

METROPOLITAN TORONTO REFERENCE LIBRARY

In his influential *Globe*, George Brown praised O'Donoghue's candidacy in Ontario's 1875 general election. His comments were extraordinary, as just three years earlier, Brown had led anti-union forces against O'Donoghue's colleagues, members of the printers' union who had struck against his paper.



Toronto where he maintained his labour activism and joined the Knights of Labour. The Knights were an American organization that was moderate on local labour issues but advocated sweeping societal reform and organization of the entire working class. O'Donoghue was no radical. He solidly opposed the admission of socialists into the mainstream of the Canadian labour movement. Along with other Knights, he wanted restrictions on immigration, particularly of Chinese labourers. But he also lobbied for equal wages for equal work for women; free, compulsory education; and the establishment of a federal labour and statistics department.

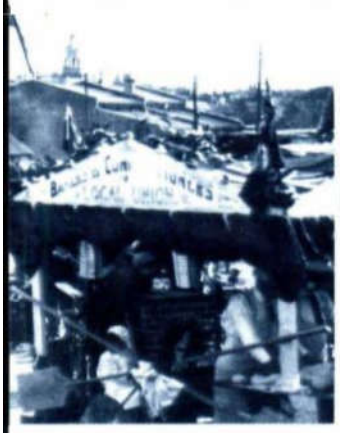
With the revival of the labour movement in the early 1880s, O'Donoghue was instrumental in setting up the Trades and Labour Congress, successor to the Canadian Labour Union. He lobbied successfully with Catholic bishops who were ready to condemn the Knights as a secret society. He was outspoken in an 1886 strike by the Knights against the Toronto plant of the Massey farm-equipment maker, calling founder Hart Massey "a brute ... devoid of soul."

His literacy and involvement also enabled him to provide historical perspective on the growth of Canada's labour movement. O'Donoghue's histories, written for government publications and a private

encyclopedia, set out the goals of the working class.

Meanwhile, O'Donoghue's drift to the Liberals had brought him into continuing conflict with other union leaders, including Conservatives within the Knights and those who believed partisanship of any kind was a mistake. His fortunes rose or ebbed within labour councils, depending upon which group's adherents then held sway. But even his allies wondered whether he had the best interests of the working class at heart when in 1885 he went to work for the Ontario Bureau of Industries under Mowat's government. "Ninety-nine times of a hundred," wrote one critic, such jobs were a bribe. "To get a position the office-seeker must sell himself, body and soul."

O'Donoghue had exchanged his youthful independence for the view that reform was most likely to be achieved by supporting the party that was most favourable to labour. In letters to Laurier and other prominent Grits, he affirmed his "ardent Liberal" ties and called for the appointment of forward-looking, "up-to-date, living Liberals" to influential positions. But his letters show him to be no toady to the Liberal leader. He would challenge the inaction of ministers and made plain to Laurier that if favourable measures were not undertaken, "the Tories would make it hot for us."



CITY OF OTTAWA ARCHIVES / CA-0222

The labour movement would establish its foundations and exert unprecedented influence during the years of O'Donoghue's involvement. This Labour Day parade was held in 1907, the year of O'Donoghue's death, at Dufferin Bridge in Ottawa.

When a young civil servant named Mackenzie King was appointed to investigate sweatshop working conditions, O'Donoghue gave the promising up-and-comer advice and contacts in the labour movement to facilitate his work. In light of the deep partisan divisions in the labour movement, O'Donoghue warned King to give no clue about his political leanings to those he interviewed. O'Donoghue received his patronage reward when in 1900 he was chosen as the first federal fair-wages officer, attached to the new Labour Department he had fought for for years.

During a fair-wage investigation in Fernie B.C., O'Donoghue fell ill. He died in Toronto in early 1907, the following year. He was survived by his eight children; Marie-Marguerite had predeceased him in 1895. His friend King attended the funeral and wrote in the *Labour Gazette* that O'Donoghue was "the best known of the labour leaders in Canada of the generation to which he belonged," and called him "The Grand Old Man" of the Canadian labour movement. The Irish immigrant printer had left a profound mark in shaping the underlying political moderation of Canada's trade unions.

Vic Parsons, a freelance writer with an interest in social history, lives in Victoria, British Columbia.

The ribstone petroglyph, so-called for its resemblance to the ribcage of a bison, faces due east. Some experts consider it may have had astronomical significance.

Story in Stone

by Darlene Polachic

Like many prairie locales, the village of Herschel, about 145 kilometres southwest of Saskatoon, appeared to be dying – until amateur archaeologist Henry Koslowski made a monumental find. While exploring the ravines along Eagle Creek in 1978, Koslowski noticed a dolomite-sandstone rock with a pattern of lines that didn't make sense. He mentioned it to friends. Word got to Marvel Houston, president of the Saskatchewan Archaeology Society.

The rock was recorded in 1982 by Ian Dyck, then supervisor of archaeology at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, but it wasn't until 1991 that Jack Steinbring and Tony Buchner, archaeologists with the University of Winnipeg, began a formal study. They determined the rock to be an ancient Indian petroglyph, in all likelihood a shrine to the buffalo. Three other less significant petroglyphs were also discovered nearby.

The petroglyphs are located in west-central Saskatchewan's Eagle Hills, once a primary centre of habitation for northern Plains Indians and an area known to have been rich in buffalo. A complete watershed system, the hills contained everything the early aboriginal people needed for survival. Eagle Creek itself was a misfit meander – a watercourse that was easy to cross. There were deep coulees with plenty of trees at the bottom for shelter, and the creases between the steep, rolling hills were

thick with wild fruit like saskatoon and chokecherry. The bison and other animal and bird species that inhabited the area provided an ample meat supply for pemmican.

Bison was the bread of life for the northern Plains people, sometimes called the Buffalo People. Bison provided food, shelter, clothing, and a source for craft materials. They were also a source of spiritual materials for sweat lodges and sun dances. So perhaps it is a small wonder native people would chose to celebrate a rounded stone that had the appearance of a recumbent buffalo. In ornamenting it, they believed they were releasing from stone what was already lying within.

Archaeologists define a petroglyph as "pecked" stone art, distinctly different from stone alignments or pictographs, which are essentially painted pictures or writing on stone. Of the four petroglyphs on the Herschel site, the largest – and most significant – is the ribstone petroglyph, a stone that has been systematically pecked to represent the ribcage-cum-backbone of a buffalo.

The decorations consist of dozens of small carved cupules (cup-shaped structures), bisected by deeply incised horizontal and vertical lines. A groove connecting to a large cup at the top or head of the rock encircles the crown. The space inside bears other designs, including a diamond with a circle in the centre. (Some wonder if the diamond-circle design might be a clan symbol.) A deep vertical groove extends from the cup down to the base of rock where there is an even larger cupule. Horizontal grooves on either side of the backbone resemble a buffalo ribcage. Another interesting feature of the ribstone is the two bisected circles near the top, believed to represent bison tracks. Excavation around the base exposed a second pair of circles.

The precise significance of the cupules and grooves is unknown, but there's plenty of speculation. In one interpretation, the petroglyph has astronomical significance. The rock, which is precisely positioned to face the east, was aligned to show the equinox. To substantiate the theory, sun, moon, and new-moon cupules have been identified.

Norma Jensen, a Saskatoon educator with a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Amsterdam, speculates the large cupules might have held ceremonial substances that would flow along the carved grooves and mingle in the large cup at the bottom. Excavations around the rock's base substantiate the idea that this was a sacred site. There is evidence of cultural offerings dating as far back as 1,300 years ago and as late as the fur-trade era.

Other anthropologists (as well as aboriginals who have examined the ribstone) believe it was primarily a teaching stone. Rather than being the result of one young brave's dream quest, they surmise the petroglyph was the fruit of a collective effort that represents the early peoples' understanding of the life journey as indelibly linked to the bison as the source of life.

The other significant petroglyph, known as Petroglyph Two, is believed to be a windigo mask, the traditional indigenous clown face recognizable by the positioning of the eyes, nose, and mouth. Two additional rocks bear minimal carving.

So what is it that makes the Herschel petroglyphs so remarkable? The most important thing is that they exist at all. Though native people have inhabited Saskatchewan for thousands of years, very few examples of ancient artwork or carved stones remain in situ. Most of the others were done on disposable or moveable rocks. Anthropologists are encouraged because these petroglyphs are officially recognized. The location was declared a Municipal Heritage Site in 1988.

Further investigations by both amateur and professional archaeologists have shown the whole area around Herschel to contain a wealth of aboriginal artifacts, including tipi rings, cairns, fire pits, rock alignments, buried camp sites, zoomorphs (figures representing animals), a medicine wheel, buffalo jumps, kill and processing sites, toolmaking areas, ceremonial and vision quest sites, graves, food caches, and more.

DARLENE POLACHIC

Carbon dating puts the earliest finds at 350 A.D., though buffalo horn 2,065 years old has been found at the processing site. These dates coincide with the occupations of the Avonlea and Besant peoples on the northern plains. The first large-scale bison hunters, they are also credited with the first use of the bow and arrow on the plains and the making of clay pottery.

The people of Herschel have embraced the fact that their area is so rich in ancient native artifacts, and are working hard to guard and preserve this natural wealth by developing interpretive tools to educate visitors. The discovery of various marine fossils including the skeleton of a plesiosaur, a twenty-five-foot prehistoric sea creature with four paddle-like appendages, has only added to the area's appeal.

The village has purchased the vacant elementary school and turned part of it into an interpretive centre where visitors can begin their investigation of the ancient treasures that have given modern-day Herschel a new lease on life.

Darlene Polachic is a Saskatoon freelance writer with a special interest in history and archaeology.

A Geographer's Diary, 1945

by J. Lewis Robinson

In the summer of 1945, there was a lull in the storms of war activity in the Mackenzie River valley. The hectic events related to supplying and building the Canol pipeline from Norman Wells to Whitehorse during 1943–44 had ceased, and the postwar resource developments that came after 1946 had yet to begin. The war in Europe was closing, and military and political attention was shifting to the Pacific region and Western Canada.

That summer, at age twenty-seven, I left my bride of eight months in Ottawa to go to the Mackenzie valley. I had been assigned by my superiors to become familiar with conditions and people in the area and to assemble as much resource and environmental information as possible from local sources and field observations. Two years earlier, I had been appointed the federal government's first professional geographer, attached on a contract basis to the Bureau of Northwest Territories and Yukon Affairs in the Department of Mines and Resources, and had worked in Canada's eastern Arctic. In the winter of 1945, however, I had been moved to the Mackenzie valley section of the N.W.T. administration in Ottawa to help with the North Pacific Planning Project, which was composed of government administrators and scientists brought together to begin planning for postwar development in northwestern Canada.

J. Lewis Robinson in the north Mackenzie valley, August 1945.

Before 1940, little was known in southern Canada about the sparsely occupied Canadian Northwest. The 1941 census reported about 2,000 white residents and 4,400 native people in the Mackenzie valley. But the war changed things. In the face of a serious threat of Japanese invasion, the Alaska Highway was rammed across southern Yukon in 1942, followed the next year by the Canol Road and pipeline, pushed through the Mackenzie Mountains to supply oil to defence efforts in the Northwest. Through this frantic period, the Canadian government had sent several scientific field parties into northwestern Canada to obtain basic factual information. Now, with war ending, development was the new imperative.

My travel plan that summer was to fly from Edmonton to Fort Smith on the Alberta–Northwest Territories border to board the paddlewheel steamer *Distributor*, and go down the Mackenzie River, stopping at each settlement along the way as it delivered the season's first supplies. But it didn't happen that way. In Edmonton I received word that the *Distributor* would not leave Fort Smith for a week or more because the ice had not yet broken up in Great Slave Lake. Rather than sit in Edmonton, I arranged to fly to Fort Smith and arrived on June 5.

June 5 Fort Smith

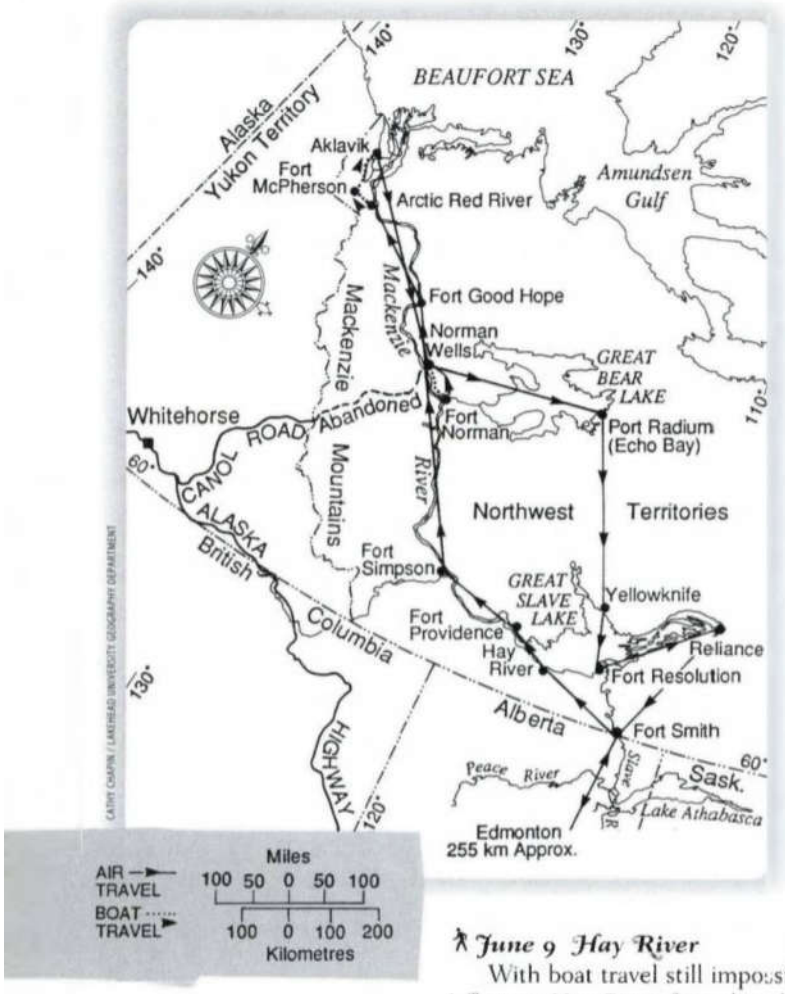
The administrative capital of the Mackenzie valley, Fort Smith was located on a sandy, dusty terrace above the Slave River, at the north end of sixteen miles of rapids, which were the only break in water transport in the Mackenzie River route. At the south end of the valley's water-transport system, the settlement had been a busy terminal in 1942–44 when the U.S. Army built dozens of tugs and barges to take supplies and equipment downstream to Norman Wells for the Canol project. But the large construction site was now quiet, the temporary housing unoccupied.

Fort Smith held about a hundred white people, mainly employed in government offices or in transportation, and about a hundred and fifty Indians and Métis. The social and racial differences in housing were visually apparent. The whites lived in comfortable, attractive, frame houses in one part of the settlement, and the non-whites lived in poor, rough, log or frame cabins in another part. I was to find this was characteristic of the other Mackenzie valley settlements and so different from my experience in the eastern Arctic, where there were no permanent Inuit homes.

My strongest memory of Fort Smith is playing nine holes of golf on what was then called Canada's most northerly golf course. Its unique characteristic? The greens were made of rolled sand, and rumour had it that the course was kept in its playable state by

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY J. LEWIS ROBINSON

arresting a couple of drunks on Saturday nights and putting them to work.



CATHY CHAPIN / LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT

June 9 Hay River

With boat travel still impossible, I flew to Hay River four days later with the RCAF, which made frequent flights along the valley in a single-engine, float-equipped Norseman aircraft. We flew out over Great Slave Lake and I was dismayed to see heavy ice stretching northward to the horizon. It was clear that downstream water transport was not going to start soon.

Hay River was one of the older Mackenzie valley settlements (the HBC established a trading post there in 1868) and an interesting example of a native settlement bypassed by the wartime transportation activity of the past three years. Still dependent on a small local fur and fish economy, living conditions were much as they had been for the past half century. The largest buildings were the Catholic church and the abandoned Anglican residential school at opposite ends of the linear village. Only three white people lived there – a Roman Catholic priest, an Anglican missionary, and an HBC manager – but I perceived little friendly interaction among them.

One of my assignments, which I began in Hay River, was to map the buildings in the Mackenzie valley settlements. No maps existed in the N.W.T. administration offices in Ottawa showing the relative position and spacing of buildings in the old settlements. A few years later such mapping could be done easily from vertical air photos, but in 1945 I did it the old-fashioned way by establishing north, measuring the distance from the river, and then pacing the distances between buildings. A final map was redrafted from my sketches back in Ottawa.

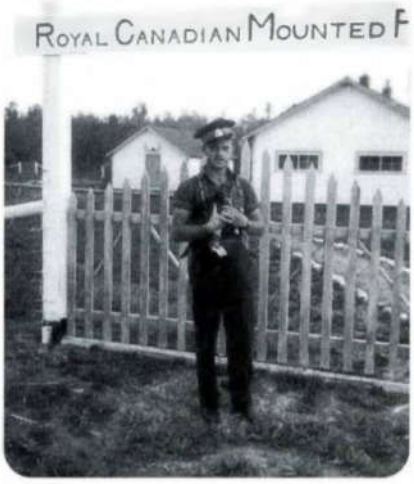
I spent a frustrating, rainy week waiting for an RCAF plane with the friendly handful of men at the Department of Transport station at a new airstrip built on the west side of the river. While there, I had an interesting wartime experience. On June 12, the pilot of an RCAF Norseman plane stopped to get gas. He reported seeing a Japanese balloon with incendiary bombs in a tree about fifteen miles south of the settlement. Hundreds of these bomb-carrying balloons were sent into the prevailing westerly winds by the Japanese near the end of the war, hoping they would drift across the Pacific in upper-air currents. Several did reach northwestern Canada and Alaska, but it was never known whether local fires were caused by these or by normal lightning strikes. Two days later some of the men from the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals set out by horse and wagon down the Grimshaw-Hay River winter road. They found the papier-mâché balloon (without bombs) and brought it back to the station. Unofficially, I was given a ten-by-ten inch piece of the balloon material, which I still have among my Mackenzie valley mementos.

June 15 Fort Providence

On June 15, the RCAF brought in two government bomb experts from Edmonton to take the balloon material out for examination. The pilot, King Perry, kindly agreed to add an extra 150 miles to his return flight and take me west to Fort Providence. The western end of the Great Slave Lake was still covered with ice, and loose ice was running down the Mackenzie River.

Fort Providence was much like Hay River in form and function. It was a linear string of wooden buildings located above steep, fifty-foot banks of river terrace. The large Catholic residential school and adjoining farm were at the west end of the settlement, the RCMP barracks were at the east end, and in between were the quarters of two other white organizations – the newly built Hudson's Bay Company store and the Signal Corps facilities. Amid these structures were scattered about twenty or thirty log cabins belonging to the native residents. As I would in other settlements along the Mackenzie, in Fort Providence I stayed in the only available accommodation, the spare room in the police residence, which was desig-

nated, though seldom used, as a jail (a favourable comment on the few problems of law and order in the settlements). In later years, when lecturing to students at the University of British Columbia about the Mackenzie valley, I would say I had slept in half the jails in the valley. An exaggeration, but there was a bit of truth in it.



Officer Dick Flint of the RCMP post, Fort Providence.

Another of my assignments was to report on the Catholic mission farm at Fort Providence. Although productive gardens were planted at all settlements in the valley, this was the largest and most northerly farm in Canada. Father Michelle said the mission owned about a hundred and fifty acres, of which about thirty were cultivated each year. There were several acres of potatoes (other vegetables did poorly because of grasshopper infestation) and about a hundred chickens in pens producing enough eggs for the students and teachers at school. But the main crop was wheat and oats, grown as feed for thirty cattle, eleven of which gave milk. During the day, the cattle stayed in the woods behind the settlement eating grass, but at night, to avoid the mosquitoes, they roamed through the settlement to the riverbank, knocking things over, waking people, and depositing dung on the roadway. Two of the white organizations lodged complaints, and the RCMP told Father Michelle there was a N.W.T. herd law, requiring all cattle to be fenced in. Father Michelle knew this, but I doubt the fences were ever built. A herd law for the only farm in the Northwest Territories struck me as curious anyway, and I wondered about the real reasons for the complaint.

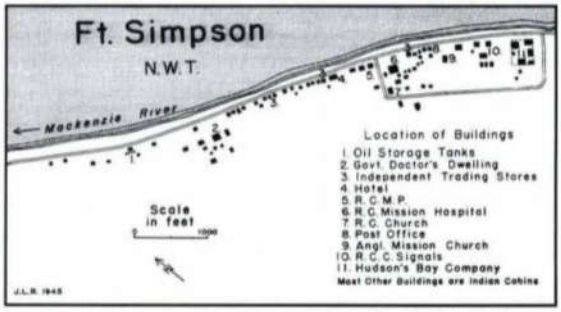
Father Michelle invited me to visit the residential school, the largest in the southern Mackenzie valley, with sixty to seventy students from as far away as Fort Norman. In a senior classroom, pupils seemed to be about ten to fourteen years old. They had apparently been rehearsed for my visit because I was greeted with a song, and I heard only correct answers to the geography questions asked by the nun-teacher. The junior classes also performed well to oral questions, and I was shown several neat and well-done exercise books. I was favourably impressed. I did not observe living conditions or discipline in the dormitories, but in my diary, I questioned the purpose of traditional rote-learning education in a world that was to change quickly for these native children.

The priest also gave me access to the church's records of daily events back to the nineteenth century. I abstracted several decades worth of information about ice break-up and freeze-up of the river to see if there were trends, noted population figures, and recorded past health and epidemic problems. I found church records and diaries valuable sources of information about the native people all along the valley.

June 21 Fort Simpson

After six days at Fort Providence, I caught a flight to Fort Simpson on the regular twice monthly Canadian Pacific Airlines float-equipped flight that brought mail and some supplies to each valley settlement. I arrived June 21 – midsummer's eve – and watched the sun dip briefly below the southern horizon.

On the east side of a small island at the junction of the Liard and Mackenzie Rivers, Fort Simpson was larger than either Fort Providence or Hay River, with a population of about seventy-five white residents and some hundred and fifty natives. Strung out above the



One of my assignments was to map the buildings in the Mackenzie valley settlements. In 1945 this was done the old-fashioned way, pacing distances and later redrafting the sketches (top). In Fort Simpson (bottom), the Anglican church and two-storey Catholic hospital were landmarks.

high riverbank for about a mile, it was also more complex to map. But people seemed to enjoy talking to a new face, and as I had arrived ahead of the supply boat, they took the time to welcome me into the social life of the village. Dr. Truesdale, resident doctor for eighteen years, drove me in the community's one "pleasure car," then helped me dig into the government records. Twice, his very pleasant wife arranged afternoon tea for me to meet the local wives (all white, of course). Twice, I joined the men at poker, adding a few dollars to the local economy, and one evening I took part in a local softball game, using to good effect my skills from the four years of semi-pro softball that helped pay my university fees. From yellowed church records at the Catholic mission, I accumulated further data on environmental and social conditions, while the very intelligent and kindly Father Turcotte added his personal comments based on his many years in the community. Elsewhere, HBC and RCMP personnel went over their fur-return records and clarified some of the problems of using these returns in Ottawa to record local fur production. Due to loose procedures and several competing traders, it seemed likely that only about fifty percent of the fur catch was officially reported.

On June 27, the Signal Corps called from the airport to tell me an RCAF Douglas transport plane would be stopping briefly en route with supplies for Norman Wells, and the pilot would delay his departure for a half-hour until I could join him. (Firm schedules were not critical in the North I learned that summer.) I also learned the ice had cleared from the western end of Great Slave Lake. Finally, the *Distributor* could leave Fort Smith for its downstream supply trip.

June 27 Norman Wells

My visit to Norman Wells was brief. The hectic construction of the Canol project was over; after thirteen months' operation, oil no longer flowed through the pipeline. With the Japanese submarine threat over in the Pacific, oil could be transported safely from California to remaining defence efforts in the Northwest.

At Norman Wells, I was told that the Northern Transportation Company sternwheeler *George Askew* was leaving on June 28 with a crew of workmen that was building a portage road around the rapids in Bear River. The captain offered to leave me at Fort Norman, fifty miles upstream. But going south against the powerful current of the Mackenzie River took twelve hours, and there was little to see; with the river deeply entrenched in glacial deposits, we were below steep, gravel banks.

June 28 Fort Norman

Like the other settlements, housing in Fort Norman was separated by race. On the upper terrace, about two hundred feet above the river, were the "outside" (non-native) institutions and buildings, including a large, three-storey government hospital with a doctor, two nurses, and about fifteen beds. Most kept sizeable gardens. The Catholic mission reported shipping a hundred bags of potatoes to Aklavik the previous year. A member of the Signal Corps kept about a hundred chickens, fed on imported grain, and produced fifteen to twenty eggs a day, at costs lower than eggs transported from Alberta.

All of the Indian cabins were strung out along the lower river terrace, most of them occupied only during the summer; during the winter the native people hunted and trapped elsewhere. Here, as I did in other settlements along the valley (and as I had in my previous research among the Inuit in the eastern Arctic), I asked local residents to locate the winter camps on detailed maps I carried with me. Later, in Ottawa, I produced the first map of the Mackenzie valley's native population winter distribution.

On the evening of June 30, I got a ride back to Norman Wells with an RCAF plane that came to Fort Norman to transport two nurses to July 1 celebrations.

I visited the hospital at Fort Norman (top). Here's a view from there looking north.

I—and they—were thankful no local RCAF senior officers were around to question whether the flight was necessary! I was grounded at Norman Wells until July 4 when another RCAF plane, with pilot Chick Wheeler, could take me to Fort Good Hope where, again, I stayed with the RCMP. We were now almost on the Arctic Circle, and there was no sunset.

July 4 Fort Good Hope

Fort Good Hope was one of the oldest white settlements in the Mackenzie valley, little touched by the wartime activity related to the Canol Road to the south. The North West Company established a trading post there in 1805, and the Catholic Church came in 1859. The government buildings were on a high bank above the Mackenzie River, while on a lower level was a line of Indian cabins called "T.B. Row," so-named for the tuberculosis that was a serious health problem among the native population. The village was then crowded with Indians who had come in during the preceding days to be paid treaty money by the government agent.

July 6 Arctic Red River

Two days later, with no advance notice, Chick Wheeler landed the RCAF floatplane on the river, on his way to Aklavik with a sick native girl and a load of freight. He said that he would leave me at Arctic Red River, a tiny settlement without radio contact, and pick me up three days later on his next flight to Aklavik. But three days passed and he didn't return.

On July 11, we heard cries of "steamboat" from the natives at Arctic Red River. It was not the *Distributor* I had been awaiting, but a small diesel tug, *St. Anna*, pushing one barge with supplies for the Catholic mission. The captain offered me a ride to Aklavik, but the tug was in dock only two hours to unload, so I had to decide whether to wait for the delayed RCAF plane or to take the next supply boat, the MV *Slave River*, due the next day. I decided on the latter. But when the *Slave* arrived, its captain brought the sad news that Chick Wheeler and the RCAF plane had crashed four days earlier while taking off at Fort Simpson. Wheeler had drowned. Without radio contact, we had heard nothing about this tragedy.

July 13 Fort McPherson

With the sun circling the horizon but never disappearing, I travelled overnight from Arctic Red River to Fort McPherson on one of the barges pushed by the *Slave River*. I was greeted in the morning by much of the native population standing on the riverbank waving small willow branches. I was impressed with this enthusiastic welcome until I learned the reception was not for us. They were simply trying to keep away the myriad of mosquitoes!

Because the *Distributor* was due to arrive the next

Looking north across the Fort Good Hope settlement (top), with the Hudson's Bay Company store in the left foreground. At Arctic Red River (bottom), friendly faces greeted the supply boat. The two fifteen-year-old girls (bottom, left) did the housework twice a week at the RCMP barracks in Arctic Red River. The girl on the left was already a widow.

Native cabins (top) at the Fort McPherson settlement. At the edge of the Peel River, the Distributor and a barge unload a year's worth of supplies.

day, my visit to Fort McPherson lasted only overnight. With about fifty cabins, the largest number of any of the settlements, Fort McPherson was more of a permanent native village, and muskrats – unlike at other settlements – were the chief fur catch. The HBC manager, Bill Carson, reported that an average Indian family would be paid more than $1,200 for a season's pelts, a sign of local good times. This view was reinforced by the *Distributor*'s captain, who commented he couldn't get sufficient local labour at two dollars an hour to unload freight and supplies.

Virtually the whole town came out to greet the first supply boat of the season. Even though it was July, the arrival of the *Distributor* marked the end of winter.

Members of the Aklavik community (top).

Deserted construction equipment at Camp Canol (right). The Canol pipeline, built from Norman Wells a thousand kilometres southwest to a refinery in Whitehorse, Yukon, was urged upon the Canadian government by the American armed forces, which sought a secure supply of oil for its defence efforts in the Northwest. Ten centimetres in diameter, the pipeline was abandoned in March 1945, when the threat of Japanese submarine attack in the Pacific diminished.

July 16 Aklavik

On July 16, we arrived in Aklavik, the administrative centre for the northern Mackenzie valley, and a place large enough to support (in contrast to the small trading posts I'd seen in the other settlements) five stores selling consumer goods like those in southern Canada. Virtually all of the one hundred fifty to two hundred residents came out to meet the first supply boat of the summer, the presence of which signified the end of winter (even though it was July). All facilities in the village, including two hotels, were full, but I was able to stay onboard the *Distributor*. However, as I had feared, most people in Aklavik were too busy to talk to me as they had to look after their incoming supplies and mail.

While the residents were busy, one of the RCMP constables took me across the narrow channel to an adjoining Indian settlement. An Inuit tent village was also located outside Aklavik village, but it was almost abandoned because the Inuit had moved to the coast to hunt white whales. Though Aklavik was believed to be the only place in Canada where Indians and Inuit lived in the same place, I noted they had separate camps and did not mix socially in the town.

July 20 Norman Wells

Four days later, I had to make a quick travel decision. The *Distributor* was leaving the next day, but a RCAF floatplane had arrived in Aklavik that afternoon carrying federal dignitaries, including the ambassador from France. The plane had a forty-five-minute stopover before returning to Norman Wells. I seized the opportunity to keep moving and avoid the slow boat ride back upstream.

Norman Wells was not part of my official settlement-studies program, but it was a transportation hub. While there, I took the opportunity to cross the four-mile-wide Mackenzie River with a police boat to see abandoned Camp Canol. The Canol Road and

Port Radium, (top left) on the rocky east shore of Great Bear Lake, was one of the sources of pitchblende, an ore containing uranium used for the first atom bomb, which hastened the end of the war with Japan. (top right) Gilbert Labine, president of Eldorado Mining and Smelting Co. (left) and Mr. Bolger, mine manager, studying pitchblende ore at Port Radium.

pipeline to Whitehorse had closed in April, and the U.S. Army and maintenance workers had flown out in the following months. We travelled twenty-five miles along the excellent road – raised about three feet above the permafrost – disconcerted by the sight of hundreds of abandoned tractors, bulldozers, pieces of kitchen equipment, and other materials lying in the open. So many places in the valley could have used the equipment, but no one was allowed to move it because it still belonged to the U.S. Army.

July 24 Port Radium

I spent four quiet days at Norman Wells reviewing my notes and awaiting a plane from the Eldorado Mining and Smelting Company that was to take me across Great Bear Lake to the strategic uranium mine at Port Radium (now Echo Bay). It was then entirely a company town, with about 250 men working in the underground pitchblende mine and in the concentrator. In the 1930s one of the few radium mines in the world, it secretly was taken over by the Canadian government in 1942, when a military use was discovered for the uranium, a byproduct of the pitchblende ore. Although some concentrates were flown out in freight planes during winter, most of it was taken by barge to the Mackenzie River during the short summer.

Production at the mine was classified, and no casual visitors were allowed to fly into Port Radium. As far as I understood, no one locally or in Yellowknife knew what the pitchblende ore was being used for. It wasn't until the end of the war in August, after the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, that Port Radium was revealed as one of the few sources of uranium used to manufacture the bombs. One of my remembrances of Port Radium – a strategic place in World War II – was that it was guarded by one lone policeman wearing a striking, wide, handlebar mustache.

While I was there, Gilbert Labine, president of Eldorado Mining (and a millionaire, though he preferred to be out of his Toronto office and in the field like the prospector he once was) took me over the bare, rocky hills around Great Bear Lake to a secret new pitchblende discovery where a new shaft was being sunk. Later, Labine, a pleasant, friendly man with no airs of importance, broke government regulations by taking me underground into the mine passageways to observe mining operations. In later years I often wondered about the health of the miners, as no particular protective procedure against radiation seemed to be observed.

July 26 Yellowknife

On July 26, the Eldorado plane took me south to Yellowknife, an unplanned disarray of frame buildings haphazardly tossed together during the gold rush of the late 1930s. The town was not attractive. It had grown up around the central rock hill of a peninsula jutting into Yellowknife Bay, which provided access in summer for numerous floatplanes and boats from Fort

Despite the short growing season, some gardeners in the North West Territories had great success with their produce. These giant cabbages were grown in a commercial garden in Yellowknife.

Smith. Crowned by a water-storage tower, the hill was ringed with commercial buildings. On level land south of the commercial core was Honeymoon Flats, a residential area composed of shacks and other temporary houses. The town was too large to map by my primitive methods, and with an estimated three thousand residents – many of them transients – it was too complex to study the people and settlement patterns as I had at the other Mackenzie valley settlements.

As a result of the discovery of gold on the west edge of the town, Yellowknife was in the beginning of its second gold boom. Although more than two hundred companies had staked the rocky hills around the town, only about ten had found gold showings in their drillings; the rest were mainly interested in selling stocks out of Toronto. But one of the original gold mines from the 1930s was expanding production, another reopened that summer, and the first buildings were being erected at the Giant Yellowknife gold discovery, which was to develop into one of the richest gold mines in Canada. Though I walked the town and talked to government employees and company managers (though, admittedly, seldom to the man on the street), I really did not experience any grassroots excitement of a gold rush. Nevertheless, I was asked to advise about the site for a new town to the south, where water and sewer pipes might be laid in glacial gravels instead of over the bare rock of the old town.

I stayed in Yellowknife for six days. The crowded hotel gave me the town doctor's office, which was used twice a week. I slept on the cot he used for patients. In my diary I noted that I read the first newspaper I'd seen in two months! The war was still going on. And I visited two well-kept commercial gardens – one of them six acres, the largest in the N.W.T.. Both were doing well financially by selling fresh vegetables at just under the price of airfreight from Edmonton.

July 31 Fort Resolution

On the last day of July, I flew to Fort Resolution where I stayed at the only hotel, which was an upstairs room in a large, unkempt old house owned by a French-Canadian couple. The next day, I was asked to leave – I had visited the local hospital, which had been quarantined with scarlet fever, and the landlords didn't want their children exposed. Once more the RCMP rose to the emergency and gave me the empty cell in the police barracks.

August 3 Reliance and Fort Smith

Three days later, Mac Allen of the RCAF and his wife picked me up with a Norseman aircraft for a quick look eastward at Rocher River, Snowdrift, and Reliance on the south shore of Great Slave Lake. I was an official excuse for Allen to give his wife a tour of the east end of the lake – another example of the informality of air travel, which had been so helpful to me. We had poor visibility over the Slave River delta due to smoke from extensive forest fires covering about six hundred square miles. It was a reminder of how much of the scanty forests in the Mackenzie valley was lost each year to fires caused by lightning. There was no fire protection service in the Territories, since the small trees had little commercial value in a land of few and dispersed settlements.

I remember the RCMP post at Reliance for its scenic setting. The east arm of Great Slave Lake juts into the rugged, rocky Canadian Shield. The vertical, colourful cliffs of columnar rock, the numerous long, narrow, islands and peninsulas, and the clear, deep, blue water – in contrast with the flat, swampy, mosquito-laden lowland around the western end of the lake – made me enthusiastic about the tourist potential of the area. There were two RCMP officers at Reliance whose function was to watch the western end of the nearby Thelon Game Sanctuary (closed to visitors and musk-ox hunting) and to record fur returns from the scanty local native population. They had only weekly radio communication with the Signal Corps at Fort Resolution, and were surprised and pleased to have visitors. We were able to take their mail to Fort Smith where there were scheduled flight connections and weekly mail service.

The next day I flew from Fort Smith to Edmonton and then took the train to Ottawa, arriving on August 8 to be reunited with my beautiful wife. The end of war with Japan was less than a week away.

J. Lewis Robinson is a retired professor of geography from the University of British Columbia. He was the first professional geographer employed by the federal government in 1943 and did field studies and research in the Northwest Territories for three years.

COMING IN FEBRUARY | MARCH

The **Beaver**

Inuit Print Fever

In the late 1950s, Cape Dorset prints weren't exactly setting the world on fire. Then TIME magazine noticed the man who'd started it all. Overnight, a people living at the frozen periphery of the world became celebrated as artists. BY JOHN AYRE

The Railway YMCAs

At the turn of the century, and for decades afterward, in Cranbrook and Revelstoke, in Sioux Lookout and Hornpayne, it was fun to stay at the YMCA. BY RON BROWN

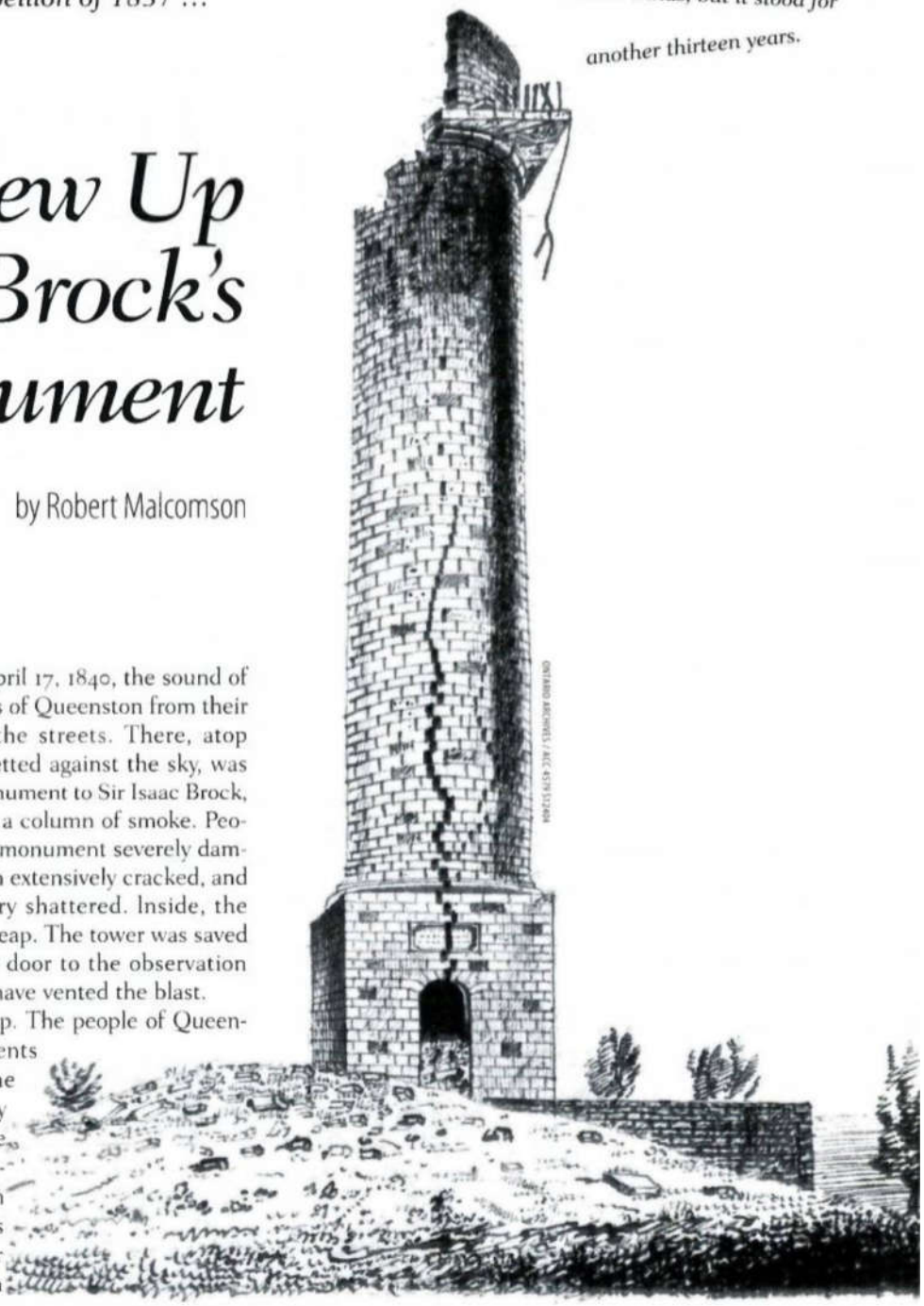
B.C.'s Black Pioneers

Free American blacks arrived in Victoria with a boatload of gold seekers. Governor Douglas invited hundreds more to follow. They did. But not all of them stayed.
BY PHILIP JENSEN

In the early nineteenth century, Brock's monument at Queenston Heights was unparalleled in British North America, the CN *Tower of its day. A memorial to Isaac Brock, the hero of the War of 1812, it was a landmark and a travel destination. And it was something more – a symbol of Upper Canada's loyalty to the British Crown. But a few Canadians dreamed republican dreams and looked to strike a blow at the Empire. Three years after the Rebellion of 1837 …*

They Blew Up Brock's Monument

by Robert Malcomson


The explosive device planted inside the column caused considerable damage to the monument.
Experts predicted the damaged monument would collapse in the winter winds, but it stood for another thirteen years.

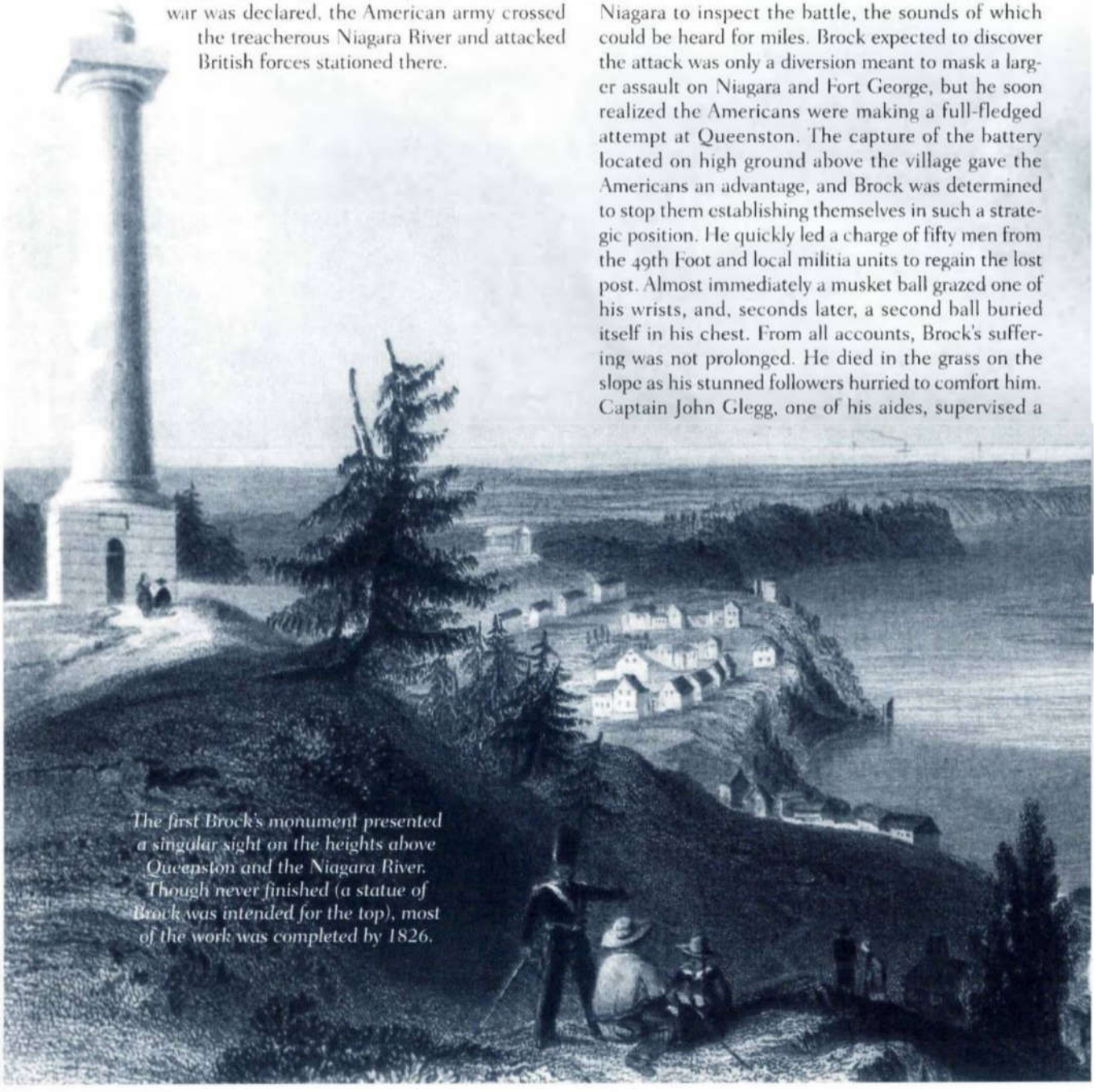
At four o'clock in the morning, April 17, 1840, the sound of an explosion tore the citizens of Queenston from their beds and sent them into the streets. There, atop Queenston Heights, silhouetted against the sky, was the forty-one-metre-high monument to Sir Isaac Brock, the hero of the War of 1812, enveloped in a column of smoke. People raced up Portage Road and found the monument severely damaged, the pedestal and shaft of the column extensively cracked, and the portion above the observation gallery shattered. Inside, the remains of the wooden staircase lay in a heap. The tower was saved from total destruction only because the door to the observation gallery, left open by chance, appeared to have vented the blast.

Brock's monument had been blown up. The people of Queenston were outraged. Some, in the moments following the explosion, wondered if the Americans were attacking again, as they had done only twenty-eight years before, when the U.S. declared war on Great Britain and struck at Britain's only North American possession – Canada. Others recalled the raids across the U.S. border that followed in the wake of the Rebellion

of 1837, which kept the border in a state of turmoil. As the news travelled, the citizens of Upper Canada expressed their anger not only at the damage done to the popular landmark, but to their own sensibilities. Wrote one correspondent in the *St. Catharines Journal*: "Nought but the most wanton and fiendish malignity could have prompted any one thus sacrilegiously to insult the memory of the gallant and honoured dead."

Feelings ran high. The War of 1812 was within the living memory of many in the Niagara Peninsula. Respect for Brock was extraordinarily strong, none more so than in Queenston where before dawn on Tuesday, October 13, 1812, barely four months after war was declared, the American army crossed the treacherous Niagara River and attacked British forces stationed there.

That cold, gray autumn morning, the first wave of American invaders was pinned down on the riverbank below the village by steady fire from British muskets and artillery. The attack might have ended there had Captain John Wool and 150 officers and men from the 13th U.S. Infantry Regiment not succeeded in scaling the gorge wall further upriver and capturing the British battery located halfway up the shoulder of the Niagara Escarpment. Major-General Isaac Brock, the provisional administrator of Upper Canada, arrived at Queenston just before Wool's men seized the battery. He had ridden south to the village from his headquarters at Government House in the nearby town of Niagara to inspect the battle, the sounds of which could be heard for miles. Brock expected to discover the attack was only a diversion meant to mask a larger assault on Niagara and Fort George, but he soon realized the Americans were making a full-fledged attempt at Queenston. The capture of the battery located on high ground above the village gave the Americans an advantage, and Brock was determined to stop them establishing themselves in such a strategic position. He quickly led a charge of fifty men from the 49th Foot and local militia units to regain the lost post. Almost immediately a musket ball grazed one of his wrists, and, seconds later, a second ball buried itself in his chest. From all accounts, Brock's suffering was not prolonged. He died in the grass on the slope as his stunned followers hurried to comfort him. Captain John Glegg, one of his aides, supervised a



The first Brock's monument presented a singular sight on the heights above Queenston and the Niagara River. Though never finished (a statue of Brock was intended for the top), most of the work was completed by 1826.

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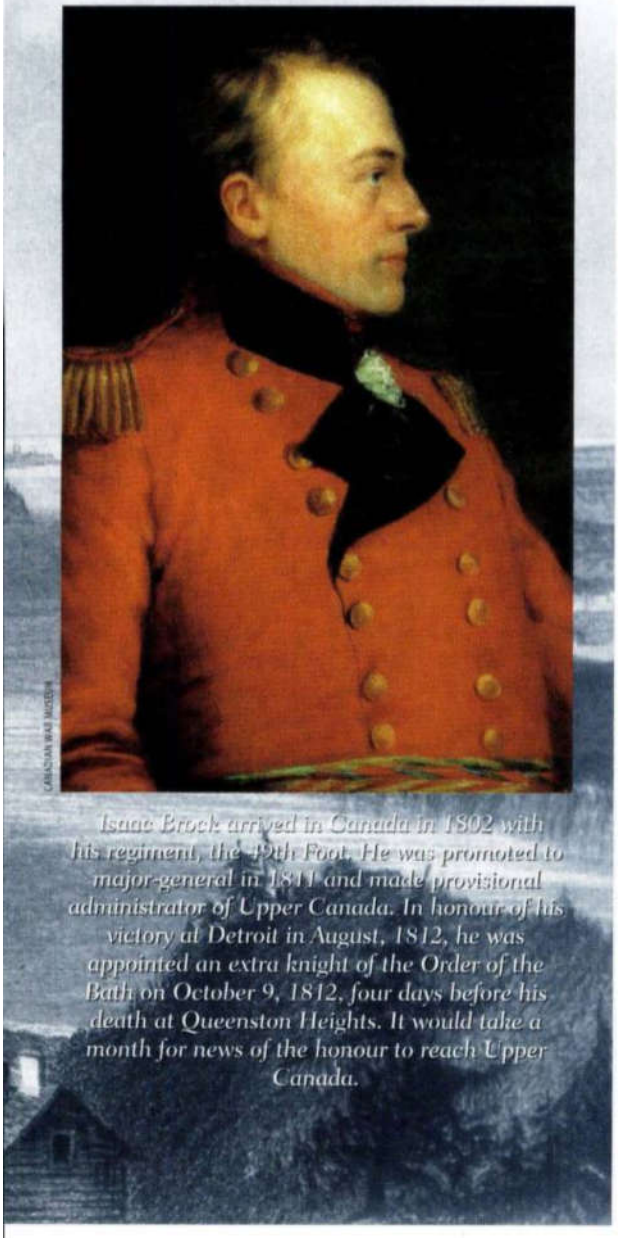
party of men to carry his body from the field and hide it in a nearby building. Brock's other aide, Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonell, led a renewed charge, but the Americans stopped him. Mortally wounded, Macdonell died early the next morning.

The battle at Queenston raged on and off throughout the day. Finally, late in the afternoon, Brock's successor, Major-General Roger Hale Sheaffe, arrived from Fort George with reinforcements, attacked from the rear, and soundly defeated the Americans. Captain Glegg then returned to the building where Brock's body had been stowed and had it carried back to Government House in Niagara.

Three days later, a grand funeral was held for Brock and Macdonell. Hundreds of spectators watched as the heroes were carried in solemn procession from Government House to Fort George, where they were buried in a single grave in the north bastion of the fort. Although the fort was occupied by the Americans for the better part of 1813, the grave was not disturbed.



Isaac Brock arrived in Canada in 1802 with his regiment, the 49th Foot. He was promoted to major-general in 1811 and made provisional administrator of Upper Canada. In honour of his victory at Detroit in August, 1812, he was appointed an extra knight of the Order of the Bath on October 9, 1812, four days before his death at Queenston Heights. It would take a month for news of the honour to reach Upper Canada.

Honouring the memory of Isaac Brock with the erection of a monument at Queenston was first proposed in 1814 in the legislature of Upper Canada, which voted an inaugural grant of £500. The next year, as the project gained momentum and three commissioners were appointed, this sum grew to £1,000. Private sources were expected to quickly provide the balance of the funds needed to build a monument of unprecedented proportions, but nine years went by before the commissioners saw the first spade of dirt turned. In January 1824 they reported £2,000 in their account, and the next month they announced plans for the memorial drawn by an engineer named Francis Hall. Early in the spring a site was prepared on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment directly above Queenston, and excavation for the foundation and a tomb commenced.

As work progressed on the monument, arrangements were made to move the general and his aide to the tomb at Queenston. Just after dawn on October 13, 1824, the bodies of Isaac Brock and John Macdonell were disinterred and transferred to new caskets. A witness to the macabre procedure recollected in *The Daily Globe*: "Although twelve years had elapsed since the interment, the body of the General had undergone little change, his features being nearly perfect, and easily recognized, while that of Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonell was a mass of decomposition." Brock's original coffin was later blown up so its pieces could be distributed among military officers.

Much pomp and ceremony attended the ten-kilometre journey from Fort George to Queenston, with more than 8,000 people gathering to watch the bands, regiments, and dignitaries accompany the funeral car up the old Portage Road to the summit of Queenston Heights, where Brock and Macdonell were laid to rest (in all probability) in a single tomb. Public officials made some brief comments, laid wreaths, and, with a salute from an artillery battery, the ceremony ended.

The construction record for Brock's monument is incomplete. By the end of 1826 – two years after the foundation and tomb were complete – most of the work appears to have been done, although no official inauguration was held. Neither does the structure appear to have been finished as originally designed. Francis Hall had intended a statue of the general to crown the summit of the tower, but lack of funds forestalled this feature. Nevertheless, Brock's monument was a landmark unparalleled in British North America. The base built over the tomb was about six metres square. A Tuscan column rose from the base topped by a pedestal forty-one metres above the

ground. An external observation deck encircled the top reaches of the monument, which was accessible by a wooden staircase squeezed into the three-metre diameter core of the tower.

Although never finished, Brock's monument was a remarkable structure for the age in which it was built. It was taller than ancient towers like Alexandria's Pompey's Pillar, and it preceded similar monuments built to such war heroes as Lord Horatio Nelson, whose column in Trafalgar Square was not erected until the 1840s. Travellers to British North America made a point of stopping at the monument. One of them, Harriet Martineau, climbed the staircase to behold the view and wrote in her book, *Retrospect of Western Travel*:

> *To the left a prodigious sweep of forest terminates in blue Canadian hills. On the right is the American shore, at this time gaudy with autumn woods. There stands the village of Lewiston, with its winding descent to the ferry. At our feet lay Queenstown, its sordidness being lost in distance, and its long street presenting the appearance of an English village . . . . We saw the white church of Niagara rising above the woods some miles off where the junction [between the Niagara River and Lake Ontario] takes place; and beyond, the vast lake spreads its waters, gray on the horizon.*

But Brock's monument was more than a remarkable piece of architecture and a famous landmark. It was also a symbol of Upper Canada's loyalty to Britain. Such a distinction, it was not unreasonable to think, made it the target of a terrorist's bomb.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1840 explosion, Lieutenant Governor Sir George Arthur offered a reward of £1,000 to any person who brought the perpetrator to justice. British officials investigated people they thought likely suspects, of whom there must have been plenty in post-1837 Rebellion days. On the other side of the Niagara River, outraged Americans directed their law enforcement officers to scour their territory for the vandals. All searches proved fruitless. No one was ever jailed and tried for the destruction of Brock's monument, although one man, Benjamin Lett, became indelibly linked to the crime.

Two months after Brock's monument was bombed, an explosion shook the steamer *Great Britain* tied to the wharf at Oswego, New York, a port town 220 kilometres east of Queenston along Lake Ontario. A trunk, sitting on an outside deck next to a passenger's cabin, was at the centre of the detonation that erupted, according to the Oswego *Herald*, "with a report like that of a cannon, blowing the trunk to atoms, and throwing fire in all directions, so that it was communicated to the wood and other materials on deck. Much glass was broken in the boat and other injury done. One gentleman only happened to be in an exposed position, and he escaped with a severe burn in his face." Witnesses on the steamer provided the local sheriff with the description of a suspicious-looking man who had been seen handling the trunk. A quick investigation led to the arrest of two men at the United States Hotel in Oswego. One of the men was Benjamin Lett.

Born in Ireland around 1814, Lett emigrated to Canada with his parents in 1819. After the death of his father, he moved with his family in 1833 to Upper Canada, settling in Darlington County, east of Toronto. Reformist politics appealed to young Lett, and in 1837 he joined William Lyon Mackenzie's rebels, going with them to their Navy Island stronghold in the upper Niagara River, where Mackenzie proclaimed a republic of Upper Canada. A close friend or relative of Lett's was said to have been killed when government forces seized the rebels' steamer *Caroline* and sent it over Niagara Falls in flames. Although Mackenzie and his rebellion were soon subdued, Lett's anti-British feelings were not diminished, and he looked for ways to inflict harm upon the Empire. He denied, however, any part in the *Great Britain* explosion. But his companion, identified as Dafoe, wilted before the constables' examination and soon agreed to provide evidence in court.

Frontier justice was not impeded by months of legal wrangling and delays meant to safeguard individual rights. Two days after the bombing of the *Great Britain*, Lett was brought to trial. Throughout the proceedings he "maintained a dogged and hardened composure ... [and] occasionally put on a sneering smile." While Lett refused to admit any wrongdoing, his partner in crime sang like a bird. Dafoe explained how they had packed the trunk with inflammable materials wrapped around three jugs, two of which contained a mixture of turpentine, saltpetre, shellac and white rosin. The third jug was filled with black powder and fitted with a fuse that extended through a hole in the side of the trunk. Lett's and Dafoe's plan had been to destroy the steamer as a symbolic act against Britain, and they would have succeeded had the device not misfired. If the two men were actually linked to the attack on Brock's monument, then a similarly fitted trunk might have been placed inside the tower during the night of April 17.

The jury's deliberation was brief. It declared Benjamin Lett guilty of arson in the fourth degree, sentencing him to seven years detention in the penitentiary at Auburn, New York. But he never served the sentence. While en route to Auburn aboard a train, his ankles shackled, Lett managed to evade his guard and leap from the train. Deputy Erie Poor, Lett's escort, called for the locomotive to halt and hurried to organize a search party. Lett left a trail of blood two miles long for his pursuers to follow. But then the

blood disappeared, and so did Lett. He didn't evade the long arm of the law forever, though. In time he was arrested at Buffalo and sent to prison for four years. After his release, he moved westward and died in Milwaukee in 1858.

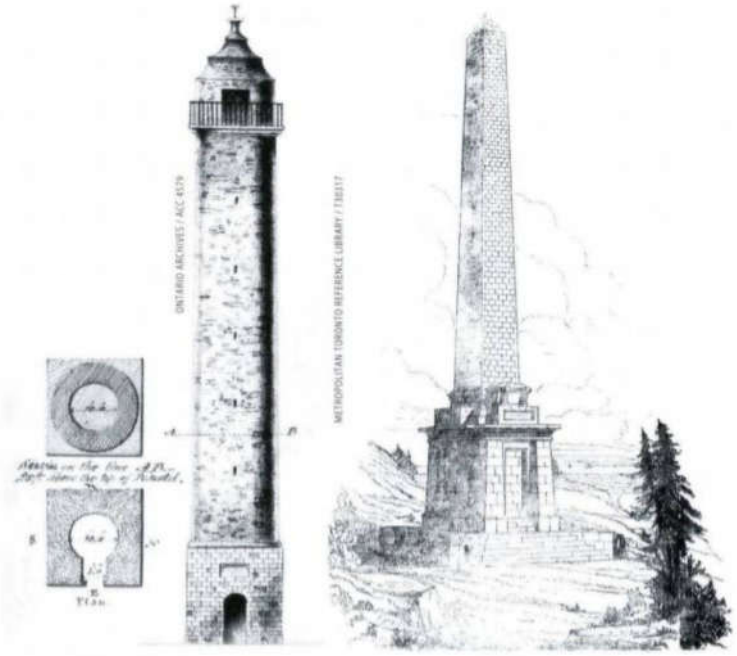
While events unfolded in and around Oswego, public outrage about the attack on Brock's monument was not quelled. Lieutenant Governor Arthur declared a mass meeting for Queenston on July 30 to discuss the matter. Proclaimed a public holiday in many parts of Upper Canada, the event attracted 8,000 people to Queenston to hear the province's leading citizens express their indignation at the terrorist's deed and propose building a new and grander structure to expunge the injury done to the singular symbol of Loyalist sentiments.

Engineer Francis Hall had already tried to convince the government he could repair the monument for a fee of £370, but his offer was rejected. A commission manned by the faithfuls of the Family Compact, the ruling Upper Canada Tory elite, began a series of meetings aimed at organizing the new project that culminated in 1843 in a contest to select a new design. Won by Thomas Young of Toronto, the solid obelisk was scheduled to rise before the end of 1844, but the Loyalist rhetoric of the Queenston grand assembly in July 1840 proved hollow, and fundraising efforts produced poor results.

Although experts warned Brock's damaged monument would tumble to the earth with the first wintry blasts of December 1840, it stood for another thirteen years. By the spring of 1853, the commissioners, having raised more than £5,000 and rejected Young's plan, chose well-known Toronto architect William Thomas to design the new monument. In July, work began to dismantle the original monument and clear the site on Queenston Heights. It was no easy task. The demolition crew emptied the debris from the tower and removed Brock and Macdonell's remains to a temporary burial site in the cemetery belonging to the Hamilton family in Queenston. Then they detonated explosive charges planted in the monument. The structure stood, resolutely. In the end it took several blasts before the old monument tumbled down, completing the job that Benjamin Lett – or someone of his ilk – had attempted thirteen years before.

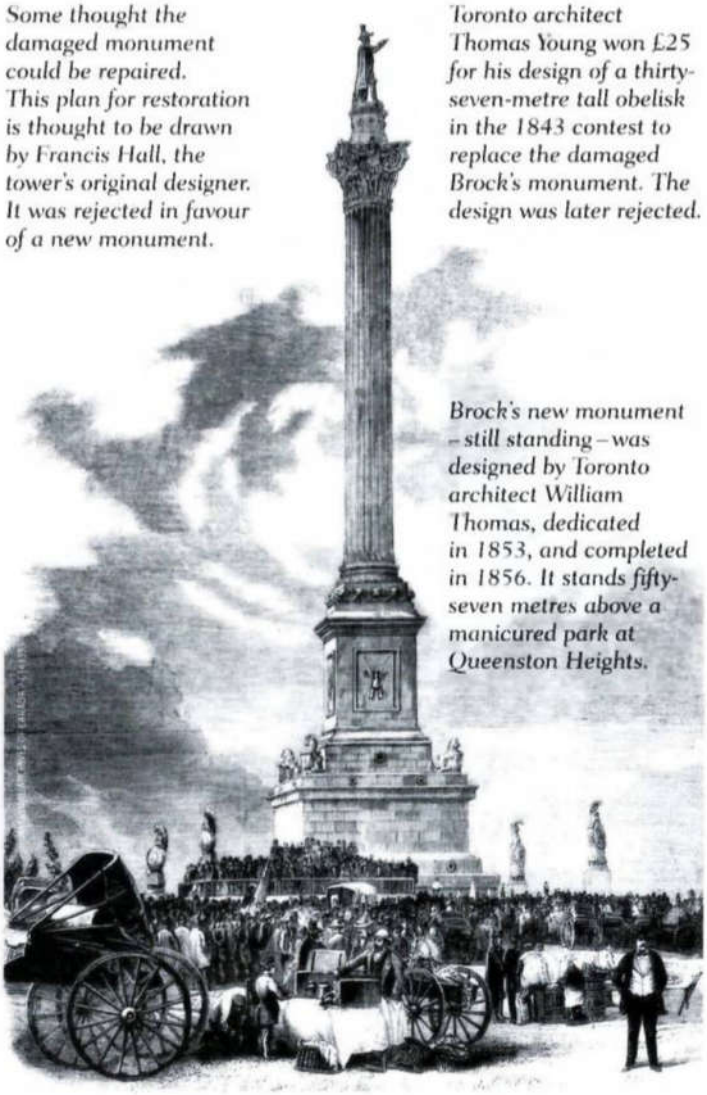
On October 13, 1853, after another grand procession attended by thousands, the fallen heroes were laid to rest in the tomb at the base of Thomas's monument. Completed in 1856, the monument marks, one hopes, the final resting place of the general and his aide. ◘

Robert Malcomson is the author of *Burying General Brock: A History of Brock's Monuments*. His most recent book, *Lords of the Lake: The Naval War on Lake Ontario, 1812–1814*, was published in October 1998 by Robin Brass Studio, Toronto. He lives in St. Catharines, Ontario.



Some thought the damaged monument could be repaired. This plan for restoration is thought to be drawn by Francis Hall, the tower's original designer. It was rejected in favour of a new monument.

Toronto architect Thomas Young won £25 for his design of a thirty-seven-metre tall obelisk in the 1843 contest to replace the damaged Brock's monument. The design was later rejected.



Brock's new monument – still standing – was designed by Toronto architect William Thomas, dedicated in 1853, and completed in 1856. It stands fifty-seven metres above a manicured park at Queenston Heights.

Reviews

Featured Books

- **Profiles in Dissent: The Shaping of Radical Thought in the Canadian West**
  By Harry Gutkin and Mildred Gutkin
  NeWest Publishers, Edmonton, 1997
  421 pp., $24.95 paper

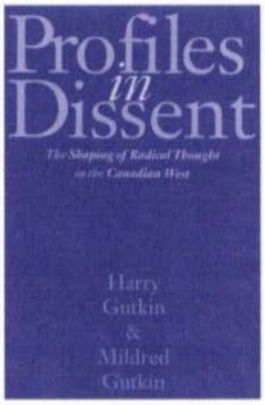
- **First Across the Continent: Sir Alexander Mackenzie**
  By Barry Gough
  University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1997
  254 pp., illus., $29.95 (US) hardcover; $14.95 (US) paper

- **The Lindbergh of Canada: The Erroll Boyd Story**
  By Ross Smyth
  General Store Publishing, Burnstown, Ontario, 1997
  174 pp., illus., $19.95 paper

1919 Strikes Again

For a number of years, the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike was a benchmark for other major events, both before and after that year of upheaval. A great deal has been written about the union action, which effectively shut the city down for almost six weeks and played a major role in creating a left-wing political movement and tradition in Western Canada.

What happened in Winnipeg almost eighty years ago has inspired a flood of writing. Histories, essays, articles, plays, and even a novel purport to tell the story of that chaotic time when the more extreme members of the Establishment tended to see bombs in every bread wagon and Bolsheviks plotting the downfall of civilization in every union meeting.



Profiles in Dissent is based on the lives and personalities of a couple of dozen men and women who, in one way or another, contributed to the circumstances that produced the strike. The First World War had occupied much of the time and energy of Canadians for four years before the General Strike. Inflation had bitten deeply into the wages of many people, and a downturn in the economy after 1918 pushed many people further along the road to action.

Unions had been active in Winnipeg for some years before the war, and left-wing political organizations had been formed and had had some small but short-lived success. The majority of the active and leading unionists and political personalities were from Britain, and had brought left-wing ideas and organizing skills with them. In addition, several ministers, mostly Methodist, had become concerned about the poverty and inequities they had encountered, particularly in large cities, and were speaking about what they referred to as the Social Gospel. So when a bitter dispute between the metal workers' unions and the owners of several large Winnipeg foundries and metal shops came to a head early in 1919, the stage was set for a showdown between labour and owners or managers.

Those who demand identified and labelled heroes and villains won't find them here. In *Profiles in Dissent*, the Gutkins have struck a commendable balance in dealing with the backgrounds and the actions of those involved in the strike and further demonstrate their objectivity by the manner in which they refer to the actions of those in authority at that time, federally, provincially, and municipally.

One of the best features of this excellent contribution to Manitoba's history is its practically seamless account of an extraordinary and tumultuous event in which sharply contrasting individuals struggled to attain their goals. This impression is augmented by the clean and tasteful way in which the book is presented – a good, readable typeface, uncluttered and easy-to-read page layouts, generally clear illustrations, and a full and carefully prepared index.

Many of those who were prominent in the 1919 strike were well known at the time, but today the average citizen knows them only through various public buildings that honour their names. Strike leader J.S. Woodsworth and A.A. Heap, both members of Parliament for more than twenty years, as well as R.B. Russell, the man viewed by the Establishment as the leader likeliest to bring about the violent overthrow of the government, are each memorialized in a notable Winnipeg building.

Other strike personalities who dominate the Gutkins' book are John Queen, long a member of the provincial legislature and seven times mayor of Winnipeg, and Fred Dixon, whose abilities took him to the leadership of the radical group in the provincial house and whose career came to an untimely end due to illness.

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In *Profiles in Dissent* Mildred and Harry Gutkin have assembled a well-researched and well-presented body of information about the General Strike of 1919, a major feature of their work being a clear statement of what the strike was all about – issues that sometimes seem to have been only partially resolved by those far-off events and by the years since.

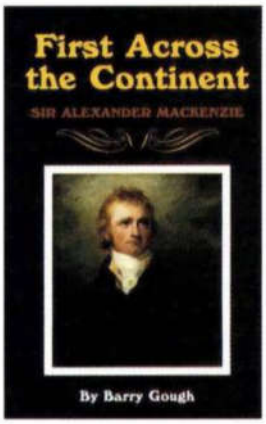
This book also contains a reminder of a short-lived but influential segment of the radical movement of that time – the Labour Church. With several of the strike leaders, including Woodsworth, Methodist ministers, it's not surprising that the Labour Church came into being when it did. It had several branches in Winnipeg and for a time was barred from holding meetings in the city. As the fervour generated by the strike died down, so too did interest and support for the Labour Church, which in its last few years became more of a public forum for left-wing views.

The authors have done a good job of tying together the economic and social causes of the strike and the political events that arose as a result of the unrest that swept through the country after the First World War. In addition, *Profiles in Dissent* provides an excellent explanation of the basis and meaning of the One Big Union movement that was, ultimately, to bring about the growth of industrial unions and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

Reviewed by **Don Aiken**, a Winnipeg journalist.

Was He In It For The Money?

Barry Gough's new biography of Alexander Mackenzie is the fourteenth in the Western Biographies series published by the University of Oklahoma Press. Mackenzie, however, was not a westerner and thought it "unpardonable in any man to remain in this country who can afford to leave it." Indeed, he never fully committed himself to either the western or eastern parts of North America; in 1805 he returned to Britain and in 1812 retired to the Scottish Highlands where he died in 1819. Despite his self-identification with Scotland, the world identifies him with western Canada, where he led the first company of Europeans north of Mexico across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific, as well as north to the Arctic Ocean. Over a dozen western places bear his name, from the Mackenzie River to the municipality of Mackenzie, British Columbia.



There are numerous biographies of Alexander Mackenzie, and Barry Gough states that his interpretive contribution is to show that Mackenzie was a man in pursuit of profit. His mastery of physical space through geographic science and knowledge of native customs was not in the interest of discovery as an intellectual or imperial pursuit, but in the interest of commercial expansion and personal advancement. Gough makes his case that Mackenzie was a capitalist more than an imperialist by placing him in the dynamic British world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, stretching from Glasgow to Nootka Sound and London to Calcutta and Botany Bay.

Of the men who jockeyed for place and position in this world, Mackenzie stands out for his achievement of forging the transcontinental link between Britain's spheres of influence in the Atlantic and the Pacific. Mackenzie also stands out as one of the few Scots of modest means who left Scotland as a youth, and returned as an adult with achievements that merited knighthood and the wealth to marry well and purchase a landed estate. Mackenzie's pursuit of profit and personal promotion kept him from being an heroic figure. He pushed the men in his company to their physical limits. His willfulness and mercurial moods were legendary in fur-trade circles, driving him to great feats of exploration, while at the same time earning him the enmity of many. Nevertheless, one cannot help but be a

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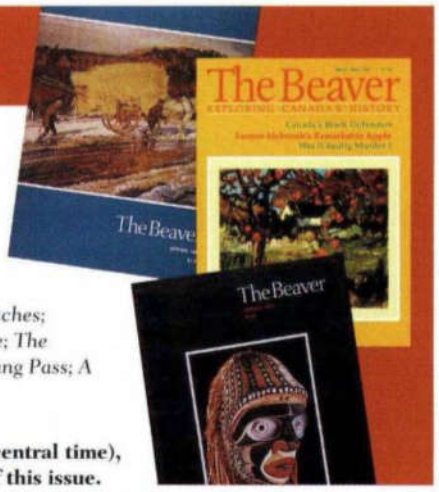

The Pierre Berton Award

Canada's National History Society established an award in 1994 for distinguished achievement in popularizing Canadian history. Canadian writer and popular author, Pierre Berton, was the first recipient. Mr. Berton agreed to having his name associated with the award in subsequent years.

In addition to Mr. Berton, other recipients of the Award are:

James H. Gray, Calgary, 1995
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Nominations are now being accepted for the 1999 Pierre Berton Award. In addition to a name and address of the nominee, nominations must be accompanied by detailed information in support of the candidate. A biography or curriculum vitae, newspaper or magazine articles, or letters of support outlining the achievements of the nominee would be welcome.

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little awestruck by his achievements.

Gough contextualizes and tempers Mackenzie's achievements by describing the social environments in which he functioned. As brief as this biography is, it surpasses earlier studies by providing a more textured depiction of the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century British world. Gough is able to do so by drawing on two decades of scholarship – some of it his own – on the fur trade, native-newcomer relations, and the expansion of the British Empire. Mackenzie's emigration from Scotland in 1775 at the age of twelve with his recently widowed father was part of a great outflow of Highlanders into the empire after the suppression of the Jacobite uprising of 1745. They settled among clanspeople in New York and then fled north to Quebec with the outbreak of the American Revolution. There Alexander found employment among the Highland merchants who had taken over the fur trade after the conquest of Canada. In these respects, there was nothing exceptional about Mackenzie, one of hundreds of Scots who had followed a similar course from the Highlands to the colonies.

Mackenzie's expeditions, like those of earlier explorers, depended on the geographic knowledge, diplomatic skills, and labour of his native hosts. Native wives accompanied some of the men, serving as interpreters as well as providing skilled labor for keeping the crews clothed and fed. A Chipewyan leader, Nestabeck, or the English Chief, proved invaluable. Before John Franklin left for his Arctic expedition, Mackenzie wrote to him recommending Nestabeck in particular, and native assistance more generally. On the trip to the Pacific, Mackenzie noted in his journal that "Without Indians, I have very little hopes of succeeding."

Gough is probably right that the pursuit of profit and advancement drove Alexander Mackenzie. But Mackenzie's letter to Franklin and his published writings suggest that discovery, in and of itself, was seductive, and had come to define him. And as yet another biography suggests, there are our self-definitions, and then there are the definitions that our associates, the passage of time, public remembrance, and historians create. In spite of himself, Mackenzie was an imperialist as well as a capitalist, a progenitor of the Victorian explorers who worked at the intersection of empire, science, and mass publishing.

Despite the necessary brevity of this biography to fit within the series, Gough has done a remarkable job of sketching the world in which Alexander Mackenzie lived and worked. For a new generation of history aficionados, this biography is a good introduction to Alexander Mackenzie, late-eighteenth-century exploration, and the expanding British Empire.

Reviewed by **Elizabeth Mancke**, a member of the faculty at the University of Akron in Ohio, who specializes in the history of the early modern British Empire.

Finally, Fame Finds Flyboy

After his record-breaking roundtrip flight from New York to Haiti in 1933, Canadian aviator Erroll Boyd was asked by a reporter, "Why is it, when Canada's airmen during the war were admittedly second to none, that Canada seems to take so little interest in aviation now?" Boyd replied, "I don't know. I wish I did know." Similarly, one might ask why thirty-seven years have elapsed between the death of a once-prominent and heroic figure in Canadian aviation and the appearance of a book-length biography about him. Part of the answer might come from another quotation from this same book: "Fame and fortune made overnight soon fades away, but the pilot retains a golden hoard of memories."

In a life filled with achievement, it is prophetic that the first award Erroll Boyd ever received was for winning an obstacle race as an eight-year-old boy. Pursuing a variety of careers, including aviator, songwriter, newspaper columnist, and hotel manager, he successfully met innumerable challenges with optimism and enthusiasm. In early 1915, the twenty-three-year-old Boyd

was refused admission to Britain's Royal Flying Corps when tests showed he was colourblind. Undaunted, he managed to pass the slightly different colour test for the Royal Naval Air Service, and began hunting down zeppelins and submarines until he was shot down and interned in Holland. After the war, in the 1920s, he was a pioneer with some of the small American airline companies, but he came to international prominence and celebrity on October 9, 1930, when he flew from Harbour Grace, Newfoundland to Tresco in the Scilly Isles, to become the first pilot to make a transatlantic crossing in a season other than summer. The success of the venture was enhanced by the difficulties of getting it off the ground. Every imaginable setback occurred, from the reluctance of financial backers to a mysterious fire that destroyed a hangar in which, providentially, Boyd's plane *Columbia* was not located at the time. Author Ross Smyth vividly describes the hazards of the flight during which Boyd, to avoid extra weight, carried no radio and had to rely on Venus and the stars to navigate part of the journey.

Not all the dangers of aviation came from weather conditions or the comparative fragility of aircraft. On one occasion, earlier in his career, a female passenger en route to Detroit showed her displeasure at Boyd's making a forced landing in Syracuse by bashing him over the head with a large alligator bag. Because of his transatlantic feat, Boyd was dubbed by the American press "the Lindbergh of Canada," a title not displeasing to him, for although he was a most loyal Canadian, as he himself once said, "I've spent so much time in the States that I'm almost a Yank."

In his acknowledgments at the beginning of the book, Smyth tells us Erroll Boyd was his boyhood hero, and as may be expected, his memoir is uncritical, at times even adulatory. But by the same token, one could say the same of Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*. Working with primary source material and with the cooperation and assistance of the Boyd family, Smyth has produced an anecdotal and highly entertaining biography, which will appeal to everyone from the general reader to the aviation history specialist, restoring a major figure in Canadian history to his rightful place. The book's final sentence, "And Erroll was a very lovable and decent human being," in its eloquent simplicity echoes Chaucer's tribute to another adventurer six centuries earlier: "He was a verray, parfit gentil knight."

Reviewed by **David Rozniatowski**, a Winnipeg writer, librarian, researcher, and translator. In the course of extensive travel, he has flown as a passenger on every type of plane from small single-engine aircraft to the Concorde.

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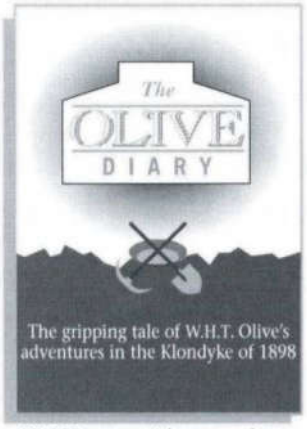

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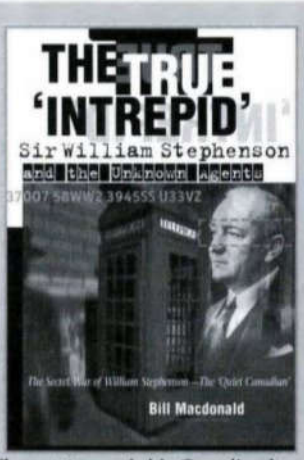

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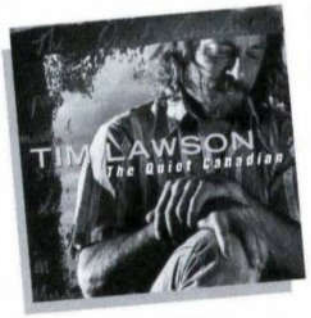

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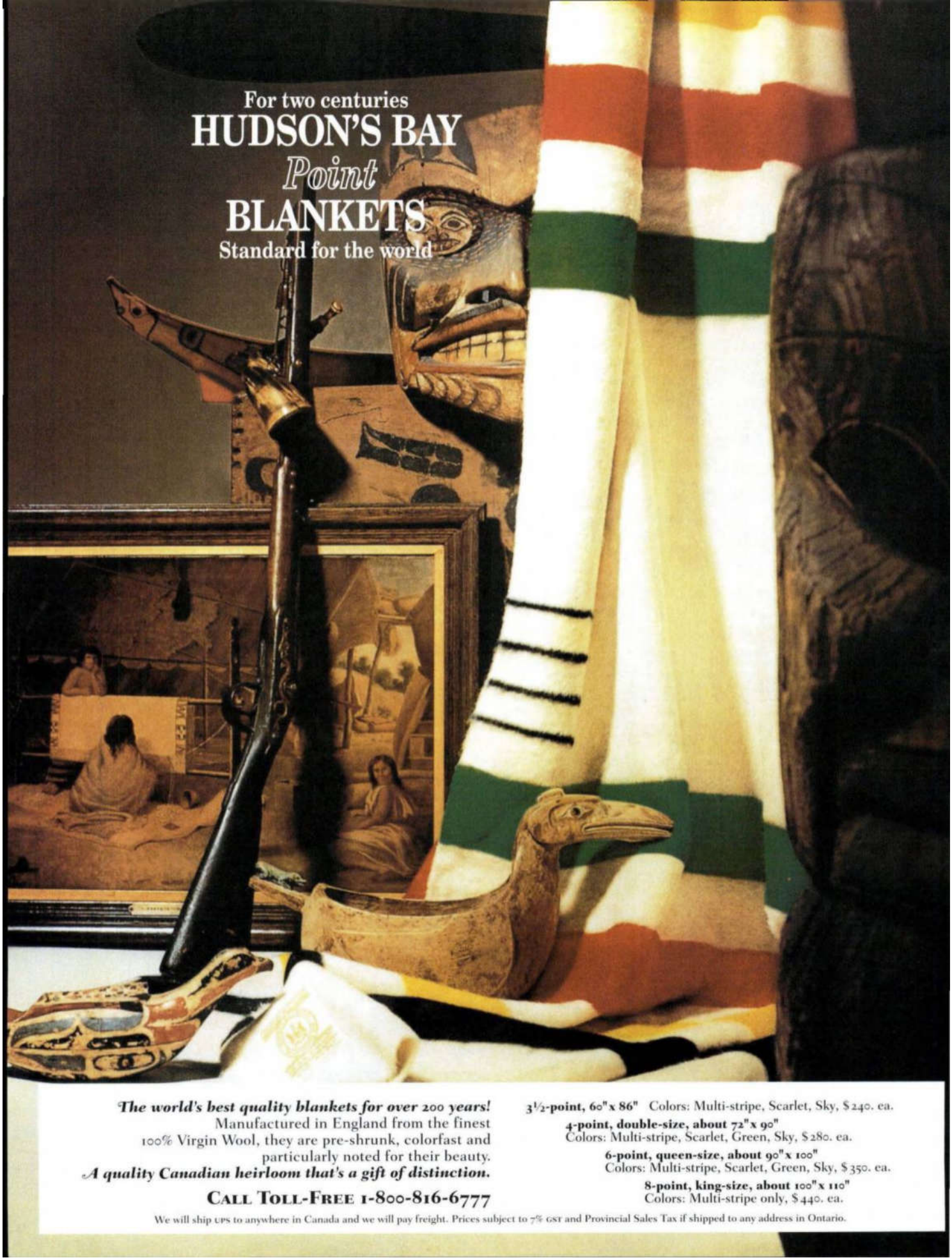

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Booknotes

In our collective national memory of the past, there are a number of historical events which we especially cherish: Louis Riel, Irish immigration, Vimy Ridge, to name a few. We seem to never tire of telling and retelling the stories, examining and reexamining the facts, evaluating and reevaluating their significance.

Perhaps the premier event which stirs our national psyche is the Plains of Abraham. A fascinating new book focuses on a central moment in that 1759 drama, the death of General Wolfe. *Behold the Hero* is not, however, the story of that heroic incident. It is more of a history of the history – that is, it is a thoughtful survey of how Wolfe's death was portrayed by artists in the decades following his death.

Alan McNairn, a former curator of the National Gallery, has obviously lived with Wolfe's death for a long time. McNairn discusses the ways artists – be they those of popular culture or those of high art – interpreted the famous death scene. Wolfe's death (from a British point of view, of course) was the great tragic moment of an otherwise glorious day: the French were defeated, the continent was liberated. Commemorating that moment in art stirred patriotic passions in the viewers (and earned income for the artists). Although the book presents more details than many of us *Beaver* readers may want to know, it is quite fascinating and most readable.

Another proudly recalled past time is the Klondike gold rush. Most of us are familiar with Pierre Berton's *Klondike* – originally published forty years ago and republished just last year – but there is much more to the story. Charlene Porsild, a Yukon-born Canadian historian on the faculty of the University of Nebraska, exhaustively examined Dawson census records and carefully considered hundreds of gold-rush diaries and personal memoirs. Her conclusions, published in *Gamblers and Dreamers: Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike*, may force a revision of the popular images.

Dawson during the gold rush, Porsild reveals, was not a town of mostly American single men. There were as many Canadians there as Americans – half the Canadians were French – and 20 percent of the entire population came from neither country. Nor were they all transients – most of the 10,000 people living in Dawson in 1901 had been there at least three years. Nor were the women mostly dance-hall girls and prostitutes. (An exploration of the truth behind that myth is the theme of another popularly written volume: *Gold Diggers of the Klondike*.)

Nor were the Mounted Police always strict in enforcing the law. Quite the contrary in 1900. When Interior Minister Sifton (on instructions from Laurier) ordered the suppression of prostitution and gambling, Commissioner Ogilvie flatly refused. The admitted "evils" were "absolutely necessary under certain conditions," Ogilvie advised his superiors, no matter what the opinions in Ottawa. So much for deference to authority.

Much of the value of this volume comes from the author's insistence (backed by overwhelming evidence) that Dawson was a true community, and a diverse one at that. It had hospitals, schools, and fraternal organizations, and a highly stratified social structure (the inner circles of its society, in good Canadian fashion, excluded Jews, Catholics, French Canadians, native people, Japanese, and blacks). The inclusion of many fine old photographs make this an especially worthwhile work.

Another book, *Faith of Fools*, looks at the gold rush from quite another angle. It is the personal journal of William Shape, one of the thousands who headed north in 1897. Because the book presents a day-by-day account,

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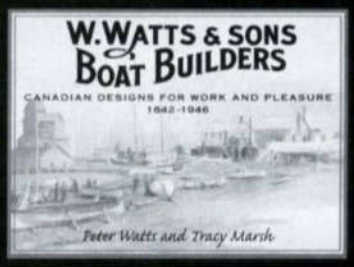

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with the hardships and the satisfactions, and because it contains many amateurishly poor snapshot photos, it has its own special integrity.

A third Canadian, oft-remembered theme is the Underground Railroad. An 1852 book written by a black woman, Mary Ann Shadd, it has recently been republished. *A Plea for Emigration* was just that, one of the many nineteenth-century volumes written to entice people to come to Canada. This one, however, was aimed at American blacks, be they free or slaves. Shadd knew Canada well (she later founded a newspaper here, the *Provincial Freeman*) and thus could write about agriculture, climate, and economic conditions in detail. Her book lauded Canada as a land of opportunity and downplayed the difficulties that black immigrants might experience.

A related volume, *Look to the North Star*, is a biography of William King, a white, Ulster-born Presbyterian minister from Louisiana. In 1849 he brought his own slaves with him to southwest Ontario, freed them, and then with them created (with the blessings of Governor Elgin) the black settlement of Buxton. Despite white resistance and outright racism, Buxton flourished and its citizens earned the respect of many of its neighbours. The biography, first published in the U.S. thirty years ago, suffers somewhat from its American Civil Rights-era perspective, but it is nonetheless an interesting read.

A "reassessment" of the black population in Ontario (then Canada West) is the substance of a study by Michael Wayne, one of twenty academic articles in *A Nation of Immigrants*. As the subtitle – *Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s* – indicates, the collection covers a wide range of material. Wayne's piece is one of three in the section "American Blacks in Nineteenth Century Ontario: Challenging the Stereotypes." Wayne argues, based on 1861 census material, that most of the blacks were not fugitive slaves from the U.S. South, but free men and women from the North. Although there were settlements in the Chatham area, by 1861 most of the black population was dispersed, living in communities throughout the entire province. And, after the Civil War ended, most Canadian blacks did not, as has often been stated, return to their former homeland, but stayed here.

The experience of blacks coming to Canada, particularly to western Canada in the early part of this century, is examined by Saskatchewan author Bruce Shepard in *Deemed Unsuitable*. The Canadian government advertised for immigrants throughout the American midwest. Experienced farmers were sought to reap the rewards of the Prairies. Blacks from Oklahoma who answered the call, however, were made singularly unwelcome. It is a sad story of prejudice and rejection.

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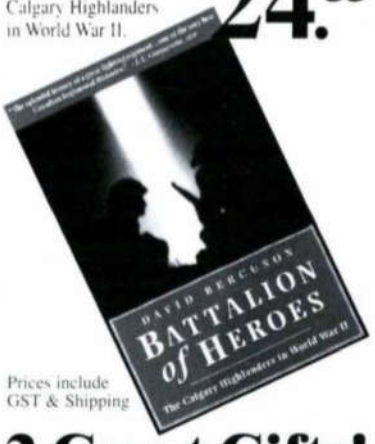

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The Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History was established by the Society in 1995 to recognize the best history teachers in the country. The program is sponsored by the Hudson's Bay History Foundation, the T.R. Meighen Foundation, the Molson Foundation, Bell Canada, Investors Group, and Tricon Global Restaurants (Canada) Inc. whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

Honoree

Tom Morton

Tom Morton (John Oliver Secondary School, Vancouver, BC) teaches grades 9 to 11, several of his classes of which are comprised of new Canadians. Faced with the challenge of creating a learning community from students remarkable in their ethnic diversity and disparate in their academic abilities, Tom has produced nationally recognized curricula with such titles as "Look Again: The Process of Prejudice and Discrimination" and "Hard Times Then and Now" that inspire critical thought, social action, and collaboration among students. One of the founders of the British Columbia Co-operative Learning Association, he works closely with teachers, student teachers, and university faculty to teach methods courses, critique works-in-progress, share ideas, and engage in cutting-edge curriculum development. He has presented workshops on teaching history and social studies across the country. Publications and professional development aside, Tom believes his greatest teaching rewards are found in the achievements of his students.

Finalists

Judi Gelowitz (David Thompson Elementary, Kamloops, BC) has been taking her grades 5 and 6 students to the historic gold-rush town of Barkerville for thirteen years. The five-day visit is the culmination of her students' year-long study of British Columbia's past. While in Barkerville, students dress in period costume, visit a Victorian school, play the role of past residents, participate in historical reenactments, and attend craft workshops. They also practise choir music and performance skills to entertain in the streets.

Judi Gelowitz

Douglas Gosse

Douglas Gosse (MacDonald Drive Junior High School, St. John's, NF) has established a stimulating learning environment for his French immersion history students, creating his own teaching units, including one on Louis Riel. He has written two novels that reflect local historical and social realities, *The Celtic Cross* and *The Romeo & Juliet Murders*, and includes in his teaching dramatic historical reenactments, dance, art work, journals, and guest speakers. Doug organized the first Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Fair in his school.

Cindy Hanson (Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School, Brandon, MB) specializes in promoting cultural understanding and diversity through community- and activity-based learning and has developed original curriculum support material with First Nations content. Her award-winning project, "Diversity: An Integrated Curriculum Approach," features historical writing study, drama, and a critical analysis of jokes, cartoons, and advertising. During her tenure, her students made a presentation to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs and produced an award-winning video.

Gloria Johnson (Sydney Academy, Sydney, NS) uses the traditional teachings of the Mi'kmaq culture in her approach to education, modelling her teaching philosophy after the medicine wheel, and reconnecting young people with their cultural traditions. Talking and sharing circles are used to recap and review material and reinforce the value of the oral tradition. Gloria has also developed curricula on land treaties, hieroglyphics, and the Mi'kmaq Grand Council. Community members are welcomed into the classroom and elders offer living testimonials about pertinent issues.

Ena Lalonde (Gloucester High School, Gloucester, ON) teaches with passion, using simulations, role play, music, poetry, theatre, and philosophy in her grade 10 class. Her submission was compiled, as a surprise, by students and teachers, and contained over 200 signatures, lesson plans, and letters of recommendation telling of her talent for inspiring critical thinking and making Canadian history real without the aid of flashy gimmicks. As one student put it: "While many believe that historians should ask the 'five-Ws,' Mme Lalonde taught students to ask how, why, and so what?"

Ken Marland (Buena Vista, Saskatoon, SK) has attempted throughout his teaching career to pass along his own love of history. He developed a miniature stamp album of Saskatoon to help children learn about their local history while another project involved the study of plains bison and their relationship to the native people and the first Europeans on the prairies. Inspired by a conference trip to St. John's, Ken created "Signal Hill: A Community Study of St. John's, Newfoundland," designed with the aid of three-dimensional models to explore the maritime community.

Cindy Hanson

Gloria Johnson

Ena Lalonde

Ken Marland

David McAdam

Gina McMurchy-Barber

Kristin Cassie

David A. McAdam (Unionville High School, Unionville, ON) strives to help his students be informed, proactive citizens. He has created an elementary school reading program staffed by high school volunteers and

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developed an extensive multimedia approach to Canadian culture and history. To promote inquiry and exchange partnerships, he is organizing an international computer network for history students. He has also co-developed an integrated arts approach to Canadian cultural accomplishments for destreamed grade 9 students.

Gina McMurchy-Barber & Kristin Cassie (Roots & Wings Montessori School, Surrey, BC) use field trips, murals, penpals, guest speakers, and games to inspire their grades 4 to 6 students, and because their classes are with them for three years, they can develop continuity. In 1995–96, their focus was on First Nations studies and culminated in a visit to the Queen Charlotte Islands. In 1996–97, students learned about parliament and visited the House of Commons. In 1997–98, the theme was the Depression, brought to life by a musical production based on the life of Gina's family.

Luc Tousignant, Vincent Ruel, and Nicole Gobeil

Vincent Ruel, Luc Tousignant & Nicole Gobeil (Ecole Secondaire le Ber, Sherbrooke, QC), teachers of history, geography and social sciences respectively, have developed the History Society of Le Ber School, structuring it to empower students, feature their talents, and foster self-esteem. One project, "On the Path of the Abenaquis," involved a three-day community presentation of native religion, hunting techniques, and relations with the French. Another event had students reenacting the migration of the English from Britain and the United States to Quebec, complete with a day of pioneer activity, theatre, and dance.

Michael J. Taylor

Michael J. Taylor (Churchill Heights Public School, Scarborough, ON) is a playwright, director, and grades 7 and 8 teacher. He has cowritten, directed, and produced two Canadian historical musical productions, *Radishes and Gooseberries*, about explorers Radisson and Groseilliers, and *Too Late to Stop Now*, about the Upper Canada 1837 Rebellion. Other productions include the musical comedy *Klondike* and a grade 8 class reenactment of the trial of Louis Riel. Michael's students won the 1998 CBC Greatest Events in Canadian History competition for "most innovative" with their video on immigration from 1800 to 1990.

Carol White

Carol White (Calvin Park Public School, Kingston, ON) brings Canadian history to life for her grade 8 students through extensive use of simulations, multimedia, and innovative teaching methods. She and her class have participated in the production of a CRB Foundation Heritage Minute and have produced their own video documenting important moments in Canadian history. Through a unique six-week unit that involves an overnight visit to Kingston's Old Fort Henry, they learn about conflict and conflict resolution, while the activity "Utopia – Why Not?" has students study cultural concepts in Canada and elsewhere.

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CHRISTOPHER **Moore**

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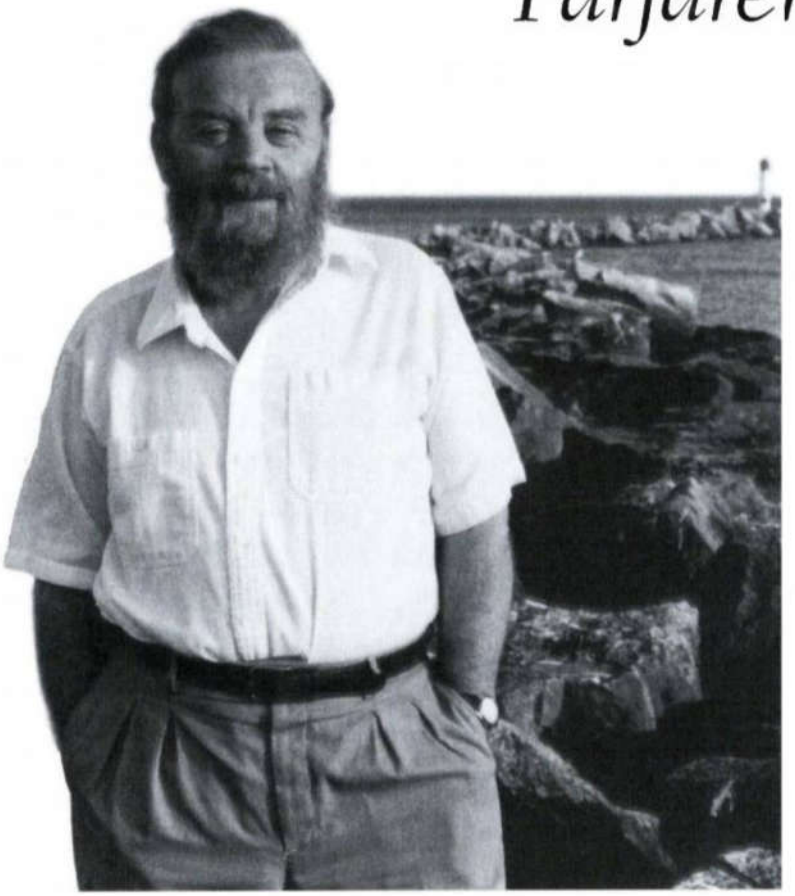


Farley Mowat a historian? Sure, he's an Arctic traveller, a wolf- and whale-lover, a kilted self-promoter, and a writer who often manages to be wise, funny, and misanthropic all at once. But a historian?

In 1965, Mowat published *Westviking*, a study of Norse voyages in the North Atlantic. It was dense with technical data, with appendices on weather and navigation, with discussions of *vestri bgyd* and *doegr*, and with long excerpts from old and contradictory Norse sagas. Both Mowat and his publisher feared no one would read it, but it was compulsive reading. It was, in fact, a powerful piece of thinking and writing about a substantial historical challenge. I still own a copy, inscribed to me by my parents "Christmas 1965"–one of the first real adult books I ever owned, and one I still admire.

This fall, Mowat is offering a companion volume, *Farfarers*, about European sea peoples who may have preceded the Norse to North America. *Farfarers* returns to the same times, places, and themes as *Westviking*, and the two books read like companion volumes– separated by over thirty years. Together they reflect something of a lifetime obsession with an ancient history.

Add to these historical studies such books as *Gray Seas Under*, *Sea of Slaughter*, and *A Whale for the Killing*, and it appears that during his long writing career, Mowat has frequently focussed his alert mind and vigorous prose upon the embattled histories of the seas, the peoples, and the wildlife of Atlantic Canada through more than a millennium. These are hardly the conventional matter of history books. But Mowat's own writing history now covers fifty years, and he has never been anyone's typical writer.

Farfarers, indeed, may be his least conventional history. In it, Mowat proposes that a European people he calls "Albans" preceded the Norse in all their westward voyaging. He goes on to declare that they settled Newfoundland and Labrador in the ninth and tenth centuries, and lived there for centuries, happily coexisting with the native peoples and regularly shipping walrus ivory back to Britain.

Has Mowat joined the crank theorists, the people who tell us that UFOs built the Nazca lines or that the Templars buried the Holy Grail in the Serpent Mounds near Peterborough, Ontario? Two things save him from that. First, Mowat is a smart and shrewd writer, who always knows where solid ground is, even when he floats above it. And second, he is on to something.

Archaeologists and travellers in the eastern Arctic and Labrador keep finding stone foundations and odd artifacts, things *somebody* made, that do not fit easily into the standard theories of who lived where when.

Mowat has been to those sites, often peering over the archaeologists' shoulders. And old European documents hold bits of evidence about early Atlantic voyages. They do not quite add up to a narrative, but they cannot be ignored either. In decades of rovings – Russia, Armenia, the Orkneys and Shetlands, Scandinavia, Greenland – Mowat has been gathering up and finding contexts for all these shreds of evidence.

Mowat is impatient with the reluctance of writers and scholars to come to grips with these clues. But if this book inspires testing of his theories, it is unlikely *Farfarers* will stand up the way *Westviking* has. In *Farfarers*, Mowat has imagined a whole civilization as the glue for his shards of evidence. Reality will be hard pressed to match some of the flights of fancy here, particularly in the last chapters about a lost Alban paradise that Mowat, on the slimmest of archaeological clues, has imagined into being on St. George's Bay in southwestern Newfoundland a thousand years ago. It's terrific writing, and Mowat's command of the story compels admiration. Mowat is surely right to insist there is good reason to believe the Norse had precursors. But that doesn't mean I believe it all. Indeed, when we understand many of these sites better, it may be ancient North Americans, not transient Europeans, who will rise in our estimation.

Recently, from his summer home on Cape Breton Island, Farley Mowat talked about *Farfarers*, about his history as a writer, and his writing about history. He seemed little concerned whether anyone believes his Alban speculations. "What I did in this book was to take all the information there is, historical and archaeological, and build up a framework that used it all and made sense of it all. It may be an incorrect framework, but I did not distort it. I did not leave out the parts that didn't fit, or force in pieces to make it fit. It is a framework, and I let it stand as a framework."

He does not insist the *Farfarers* story must be true (and indeed the library codings inside the cover classify *Farfarers* as fiction), only that it works to explain what he has encountered. He seemed disinclined to defend his speculations, and I had not called to debate archaeological details with him. We moved on to other matters, for one, how he became a writer. I suggested it must have been an odd and exotic ambition for a young Canadian in the 1940s, when CanLit was hardly imagined. But Mowat disagreed. He chose writing, he said, because "it was either that or get a job."

"It was easy to be a writer in the 1940s, far easier than it has been since. Then there was an enormous market for written work, hundreds and thousands of magazines looking for freelance writing. If you were able to write for beans, you could write constantly, and you could begin to support yourself. No, it is much, much worse for a writer today. Today all the magazines are house magazines, and the stories are all assigned by editors. Then a writer could actually freelance and sell what he wrote."

Doubt about humanity's purpose in nature has been Mowat's deep theme, and life in Atlantic Canada has always given him scope to explore it.

Where did the young freelance writer find his lifelong theme, his passion for nature and for people who live close to it? Had the bloody war experience he recalled in his books *And No Birds Sang* and *My Father's Son* turned him to nature?

"I was already a student of nature," Mowat replied instantly. "Nature has engaged my interest since I was just a brat. You might say, in fact, that the only form of nature I was not interested in was human nature.

"What the war did for me was raise the question of the validity of the human species. And my war experience did not give me any validation of the reasons for the existence of the human species. We are a very bad and dangerous form of life, and might very well be dispensed with."

That doubt about humanity's purpose in nature has been Mowat's deep theme, and life in Atlantic Canada has always given him scope to explore it, both on the large scale (*Sea of Slaughter*) and the small (*Whale For the Killing*). In *Farfarers* he eulogizes his Albans as peaceable folk – particularly by comparison to the violent Norse, who harry and pursue them – but he never glosses over the relentless killing of wildlife that underpinned most exploration and settlement. Norse raiding may have pushed his Alban heroes west across the Atlantic, he argues, but so did the scarcity of walrus that their ivory hunting created wherever they settled.

Once more Mowat is both appalled by what people do to nature and impressed by how people, who live close to nature, cope. "I am convinced," he says, "that the human animal is a social animal, and that tribalism is the natural and proper state of humanity. We should be going back to tribalism wherever possible. I think tribalism is our only chance for survival. Bigness is not for us."

Could St. George's Bay, which Mowat proposes as the place his long-ago "farfarers" settled, really be his image of a promised land, the secret refuge for the happy tribe whom he calls Albans, but who might stand for all of us?

"Well, St. George's Bay *is* a little promised land," Mowat retorts. "It is perhaps the most ignored corner of Newfoundland and it's a fascinating corner." He declares it was the evidence and not his own dream that led him there.

I'm not so sure. I suspect a lot of the history recounted in *Farfarers* bears little resemblance to what actually unfolded on the east coast of North America a thousand years ago. But it does follow the enduring concerns of a writer who has had deep and difficult things to say about what it means to live on the northern half of North America. And as you would expect from Farley Mowat, it's vigorous, fresh, and well worth arguing with. ◘

***Farfarers* by Farley Mowat is published by Key Porter Ltd.**

Album

Adrian Paton, who submitted this photo to the *Beaver*, lives in Arcola, Saskatchewan, and is a collector of historic pictures.

Turkey Trot When you sit down to your Christmas turkey this year, consider that your plump bird has most likely *not* served time ferrying a little girl around a farmyard. But one day in 1914, Wauchope, Saskatchewan naturalist Harold Herbert Pittman and his wife, Elizabeth, thought it would be great fun to hitch a pair of turkeys to a wagon and pose their niece, Tootsy, driving such fleet steeds onward. Clearly, in the picture, six-year-old Tootsy is not finding the situation a laugh riot. And who can say what the turkeys were feeling? As Tootsy – or as she is more properly know today, Jean Erickson – comments, a turkey's aptitude consists largely of "eating, running away, and being stupid." Running away was not on the agenda the day this picture was taken, however. Elizabeth Pittman sewed white fabric harnesses for the birds and put her husband's niece in her Sunday best. Neither child nor turkey was particularly cooperative, and it took a lot of patient manoeuvering to take the snapshot. In her ninetieth year, Jean Erickson still lives in Wauchope, in southeast Saskatchewan. As for the turkeys, well, you might imagine their fate. ◘

Do you have an old photograph that captures a moment, important or ordinary, in our country's history? If you would like to submit it for possible publication, have it copied at your local photo shop (please don't send priceless originals) and send it to: Album, c/o *The Beaver*, #478–167 Lombard Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0T6. Include a brief description of the photo, including its date and location. If possible, identify people in the photograph and provide further information about the event or situation illustrated. To have your copy returned, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

HISTORY™
TELEVISION

IT'S ABOUT TIME.™

DECEMBER '98/JANUARY '99 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

HISTORY ON FILM *Wednesday – Saturday at 9 ET/PT*

Four nights a week, viewers turn to History Television for some of the greatest stories ever brought to film. Upcoming films include: *The Great Escape*, starring Steve McQueen and James Garner (Fri., Dec. 25), *Midnight Express*, starring Randy Quaid and John Hurt (Sat., Dec. 26), *Lawrence of Arabia*, starring Peter O'Toole (Thu., Dec. 31), *Gandhi*, starring Ben Kingsley and Candice Bergen (Thu., Jan. 7 & Fri., Jan. 8), *Salvador*, starring James Woods and James Belushi (Sat., Jan. 23), *Journey of August King*, starring Jason Patric (Sat., Jan. 30) and four great Vietnam movies: *Hamburger Hill* (Wed., Jan. 13), *Casualties of War* (Thu., Jan. 14), *Apocalypse Now* (Fri., Jan. 15) and *Platoon* (Sat., Jan. 16).

HISTORY PRESENTS *Monday nights at 9 ET/PT*

History Television kicks off the week with **History Presents**; the world's best award-winning documentaries, giving a fascinating picture of history at its most relevant. In timely fashion, they are often geared to important calendar dates and anniversaries, significant historical themes, and major movements or eras. December and January feature outstanding specials such as:

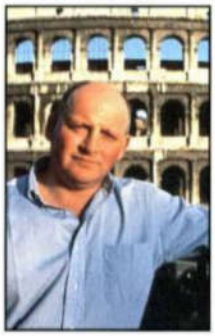
• **Superior: Under the Shadow of the Gods** *(Dec. 21)* – Explores the many legends of the lake, from the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald to the Ojibwe Underwater Manitou – a half serpent, half lynx malevolent god capable to sending those on the water to their deaths.

• **Mandela** *(Dec. 28)* – The story of this remarkable man and his struggle with oppression, his dignity and hope over despair, his self-discipline and respect over persecution and hate.

• **El Che** *(Jan. 4 – note new date)* – The life of Che Guevara, one of the most charismatic and enigmatic icons of revolution.

DESTINATION: HISTORY *Weeknights at 8 ET/5 PT*

Every weeknight, **Destination: History** takes armchair time-travelers on a fascinating journey through the ages. Programs in this timeblock include:



• **Testament**, a documentary series about the stories and origins of the Bible;

• **Ecce Homo**, an exploration of the fundamental themes of civilization including emotions, instinct, sexuality and the meaning of life;

• **The Celts**, an examination of the origins of the Celtic peoples of Western Europe;

• **500 Nations**, explores the history of First Nations people and their civilization in North America. Hosted by Kevin Costner.

TURNING POINTS OF HISTORY *Tuesdays at 10 ET/PT*

Starting January 5 Back by popular demand, this documentary series looks at the critical events that altered the course of Canadian and world history. The show recreates these dramatic events from as many perspectives as possible, from the principals to eyewitnesses to citizens unaware of the unfolding event. Tune in on Jan. 5 for a look at the Suez Crisis, Jan. 12 for an account of the Race to the Moon, and Jan. 18 for an examination of the development of the Polio Vaccine.

THE CANADIANS *Sundays at 7 ET/Mondays at 8 PT*

The Canadians is an original biography series exploring the fascinating lives of famous and not-so famous Canadians. The series promises to continuously surprise and amaze the viewer, unfolding the colourful lives of an eclectic mix of characters – and providing insight into the times in which they lived. Subjects include: La Bolduc, Ruby Keeler, Angus Walters, Francis Rattenbury, Ma Murray, Two Gun Cohen, Agnes McPhail and Louis B. Mayer.

SUBMARINE WEEK

Starting January 24 History Television presents the world premiere of *Nuclear Sharks*, a History Television original, followed by *U-Boats*, an examination of the deadly German submersible ships. **Submarine Week** continues with *Deadly Seas*, a compelling account of one of the most dramatic engagements of the battle of the Atlantic on Jan. 27, followed by the classic films *Sea Wolves* and *The Enemy Below*.

HISTORY™ TELEVISION

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DECEMBER '98 JANUARY '99 SCHEDULE

EASTERN	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
8:00AM	DESTINATION: HISTORY					RAT PATROL	THE GREAT WAR
8:30AM						RAT PATROL	
9:00AM	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY					WAR STORIES	TURNING POINTS
9:30AM	THE CAMPBELLS						
10:00AM	DRAMA SERIES (WISH ME LUCK, COLDITZ, SECRET ARMY)					HISTORY PRESENTS	COLD WAR
10:30AM							
11:00AM	COMBAT						HISTORY OF WARFARE
11:30AM							
12:00PM	RAT PATROL					COLD WAR	THE GREAT WAR
12:30PM	TRUE ACTION ADVENTURES						
1:00PM	HISTORY PRESENTS	WAR STORIES	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	500 NATIONS	THE KENNEDYS
1:30PM							
2:00PM		TURNING POINTS				WESTERN MATINEE	HISTORY ON FILM
2:30PM							
3:00PM	THE CANADIANS	COLD WAR	HISTORY BITES	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY			
3:30PM							
4:00PM	A CENTURY OF CONFLICT					RAT PATROL	SPICE OF LIFE
4:30PM							
5:00PM	COMBAT					SECRETS OF WWII	THE UNTOUCHABLES
5:30PM							
6:00PM	THE CAMPBELLS					TURNING POINTS	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY
6:30PM	RAT PATROL						HISTORY BITES
7:00PM	TRUE ACTION ADVENTURES					SPICE OF LIFE	THE CANADIANS
7:30PM	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY					THE UNTOUCHABLES	
8:00PM	DESTINATION: HISTORY					HISTORY BITES	ADVENTURE SUNDAYS
8:30PM							
9:00PM	HISTORY PRESENTS	WAR STORIES	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	
9:30PM							
10:00PM		TURNING POINTS					
10:30PM							
11:00PM	THE CANADIANS	COLD WAR	HISTORY BITES	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY			
11:30PM							
12:00AM	HISTORY PRESENTS	WAR STORIES	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	HISTORY ON FILM	
12:30AM							
1:00AM		TURNING POINTS					
1:30AM							
2:00AM	THE CANADIANS	COLD WAR	HISTORY BITES	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY			
2:30AM							
3:00AM	RAT PATROL					HISTORY BITES	
3:30AM	TRUE ACTION ADVENTURES					SPICE OF LIFE	
4:00AM	DESTINATION: HISTORY					THE UNTOUCHABLES	
4:30AM							
5:00AM	A CENTURY OF CONFLICT					500 NATIONS	
5:30AM							
6:00AM	COMBAT					TURNING POINTS	CABLE IN THE CLASSROOM
6:30AM							
7:00AM	IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY					COLD WAR	THE CANADIANS
7:30AM	THE CAMPBELLS						

Program changes may occur.

DESTINATION: HISTORY

ADVENTURE SUNDAYS